

THE LATCHKEY FOR WOMEN. SEE PAGE 452.

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"I HAVE LEARNED ALL," SAID LYON, HEAVILY, "ADRIEL IS DYING! AND YOU ARE HER MURDERESS!"

CHILD ADRIEL

A NOVELETTE.

Complete in this Number.

By the Author of "A Tangled Web,"
"The Ocean of Life," "Marigold,"
etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"I REALLY see no reason why Adriel should not go," said Miss Aurora Vinter. "After all, they are her mother's people, and the visit need not be an expensive one. Of course the child must have one or two new gowns, but I

think we are able to afford those without pinching."

"If she goes," Miss Biddy remarked, almost in tears, "she will come back to us wholly spoiled for our quiet life—that is, if she ever returns at all, for of course some man will fall in love with her pretty face, and steal her heart from us."

Miss Aurora leaned forward, and, laying one hand upon her sister's, said,—

"Aren't you doubting the child's goodness and love when you speak so? And do you know, Biddy dear, I would be glad to see her safe in some kind man's keeping. She will be all alone when we are gone; and have we found single blessedness so very alluring?"

The plain, kind face was full of sisterly compassion as she spoke, and Biddy, who was al-

ways the most impulsive of the two, threw her arms about her sister's neck, crying,—

"I am a selfish old woman, as well as a foolish one. Let it be as you wish, Aurora, but all the sunshine will go out of the house with Adriel."

"But if it is for her happiness you will gladly live in the shade awhile!"

"Yes, sister, yes; we will think of her first. Heaven bless her!"

"Very well, dear. It now remains for us to tell her what this letter contains," laying one shapely hand upon an envelope adorned with a coronet. "I wonder how she will take the news?"

And then both sisters sat silent awhile, each busy with her own thoughts, and the only sound in the room was the clicking of their needles, as they knitted as though for dear life.

They were homely-looking women, although they bore the stamp of good birth. They never could have been pretty, even in early youth; but their hearts were hearts of gold, and a man might well have esteemed himself fortunate to have won either sister.

But men mostly prefer the glittering dress to the pure metal, and so it came about no man had ever sought them, ever cared to linger by their side, to whisper pretty nothings or ardent love-vows in the tender gloaming.

Miss Aurora was now forty, Biddy thirty-eight, whilst their father, had he lived until the opening of our story, would have been sixty-five. The professor's wife had been dead years and years before he contracted his second marriage with the almost penniless Miss Sandilands, to the great surprise and anger of her family. The lady was a belle, beautiful, amiable, young; but she preferred the elderly professor to all her admirers, and from the day of her marriage, her mother, Lady Sandilands, never saw or spoke with her again. But the Professor's daughter's, young women then, but still a little older than his bride, took her into their warm hearts, loved her, made much of her, and for twelve, short, happy months, Gertrude Vinter lived in Paradise.

Then her baby was born, and its birth cost the young mother her life. The Professor did not long survive his darling.

But the little one never missed a mother's care, or a mother's love, her step-sisters being passionately devoted to her. And as she grew up they lavished upon her all the pent-up love and tenderness of their true, womanly hearts.

Adriel was eighteen now, and in all her little life Lady Sandilands had taken no notice of her grandchild; then, whether it was because some acquaintance had seen and remarked on the girl's pretty face, or that she was growing old, and the cruel treatment that she had accorded her daughter weighed heavily upon her conscience, she wrote, inviting the girl to spend the ensuing season with her, promising to advance her interests in every way.

"And we both know what that means," poor Biddy had said, bitterly. "She will try to make our darling as selfish and worldly as herself, and compel her to marry money, and not for love. How dare she write us, after these long years of silence?"

And although in the end she yielded to Aurora's persuasions, in secret she fumed and fretted over Lady Sandiland's audacity; and so far as her gentle nature would permit, hated her for her old enmity towards the dear, dead father, and her cruel avoidance of his pretty young bride.

The eldest Miss Sandilands had been a woman after her mother's own heart, and had done her duty by marrying a wealthy railway contractor, whom, privately, she detested.

She, too, had long been dead; she, too, had left an only daughter, who, when her father joined the great majority, found herself one of the greatest heiresses in society.

She resided with her grandmother, and was the only creature in the world who dared run counter to Lady Sandiland's wishes and commands. At twenty, Vera Garland was a handsome, imperious, wilful woman, with many a lover sighing at her feet, but as yet, she would have none of them.

"I hope," said Miss Biddy, after a long silence, during which she had thought of all these things, "I hope Miss Garland is nice, so that she will be a pleasant companion for Adriel; but I am afraid heiresses are likely to be spoiled by flattery."

"Biddy," said her sister, "it appears to me you are bent upon taking a dark view of everything to-day; and it is neither right nor kind."

The rebuke was uttered in the mildest of tones, and accompanied by the most affectionate expression, but it quite subdued Biddy.

"I am a nasty, disagreeable, uncharitable woman," she began, and then, by common con-

sent, they were silent as a sweet, high voice clef the air,—

"Alone in the garden I cry in my pain,
Oh, bloom again, roses! oh, love, come again!"

And then in the doorway appeared a slim, white-robed figure, with hands flower-filled; and the sweet, sad song died out as the dark eyes rested on the troubled faces of the spinster sisters.

The girl came hurriedly forward, and tossing her flowers upon the table said, imperiously,—

"What has happened? What has gone awry? You may as well confess at once, because evasion is useless with me," and seating herself upon the edge of the table she waited for Aurora to speak.

"Nothing is wrong, dear child," the eldest sister said; "rather something pleasant has happened. Lady Sandilands has written inviting you to spend the season at Palace Gardens with herself and your cousin, Miss Garland."

Adriel's fair young face darkened, and the level brows contracted.

"She might have spared herself the trouble," she said, quickly. "I am not going. I wonder she is not ashamed to suggest such a thing after all these years!"

Biddy smiled approvingly; but Aurora, who was intent upon doing what she believed her duty, remarked,—

"I think you ought to go, Adriel. Lady Sandilands is an old woman, and her wishes should be studied as far as possible. Then, too, you are her own grandchild."

"I'm not proud of the relationship!" retorted Adriel, for she was a young lady of considerable character, "and I don't choose to acknowledge it. Consider the subject closed, Aurora."

Here Biddy so far forgot herself as to faintly clap her hands in approval of Adriel's sentiments, but Miss Vinter said, quickly,—

"For shame, Biddy! You should not encourage the child in her rebellion. Come, sit beside me, Adriel."

"And listen awhile to rayon?" sang the girl, defiantly; but she sank into a seat beside Aurora, and put an arm about her square waist.

"Yes, I want you to be both reasonable and obedient. It is my wish you should join Lady Sandilands as soon as possible."

"That is a very polite way of saying you are tired of me at last," Adriel answered, swiftly. "I'd be open and tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, were I you!"

Then seeing Aurora's pained look she relented and impetuously throwing her arms about her neck kissed her right heartily.

"I didn't mean it, dear! I didn't mean it! But I don't want to leave you, and I won't. No, not for fifty grandmothers!"

Here Miss Biddy again murmured her approval, and was again suppressed.

"I think, dear," said her sister, "you forget that it is your mother's mother who asks this thing of you, and she is entitled to some consideration from you."

"I fail to see that. She despised and ignored my father. She treated my mother shamefully, and ever since I was born she has systematically avoided you—you, my own dear sisters, the best and dearest women in the world. Give me her letter."

Biddy passed the offending note to her, and with heightening colour and curving lip Adriel read aloud, in a drawling tone,—

"Lady Sandilands presents her compliments to the Misses Vinter, and begs that they will allow their young sister to spend the remainder of the season at Palace Gardens. Lady Sandilands ventures to say that Miss Adriel Vinter will derive benefit from such a visit, and that the society of her cousin, Miss Garland, will greatly aid in perfecting her in all the little details of a lady's education. Lady Sandilands will be obliged by an early reply."

"I shall not go," Adriel said again, as she

tossed the note aside, "so you may write her ladyship to that effect, Aurora."

"My dear, you are young and impetuous, and just now being sheltered by our love, and happy in our simple home, you are content. But you would not always be so. You are cleverer and brighter than we are, and you want a fuller life."

"I don't want anything you are not to share, you darlings!"

"But think, Adriel, child, we are so many years older than you. In the course of nature we must die first."

"Fiddlesticks and frying-pans! You always talk of yourselves as old women, and I won't allow it. Why, you are not much older than mamma would be if she had lived, and I never can think of her as young and fair."

"She was both, dear, and she died in the flush of youth and joy. Dear, I think Biddy and I have always striven to teach you love and reverence for your dear mother, to live as she would wish—"

"Oh, indeed, and indeed you have!" the girl interrupted.

"Well, then, let me tell you this. I am quite, quite sure that were she now living she would say, 'Go to my mother, forget and forgive the past.' She was never sore or angry against Lady Sandilands or Mrs. Garland. She never said one evil or bitter word of them, although I am quite certain their coldness clouded her otherwise cloudless life. And when she lay dying, she said, 'I hope, one day, mamma will give baby the love she never gave to me, and that my little girl will be her greatest comfort and support.'

Adriel sat with downcast eyes; her face was flushed and her lips quivered a little, but she did not speak, only it was evident to Biddy that she was gradually yielding to Aurora's eloquence.

"And even with her last breath, as she committed you to your father's care, she said, 'Jasper, if ever my mother wished to see the child, you will not refuse her that request' and he answered, 'No.' Now, my darling, what will you do?"

The girl rose, and, walking to a window, stood looking out through a mist of tears. Presently she said, chokingly,—

"I will go; but it is under protest, and I will revenge myself by hating my grandmother with all my heart. There, you need not begin to scold, Aurora, for on this subject I will not be scolded; and I'll be as disagreeable as the days are long, when once I am at Palace Gardens," and with that she rushed upstairs, and in her own room indulged in a stormy burst of tears.

She had hardly regained her calmness when Biddy appeared, and sitting mournfully on the bedside, began her dolorous complaint.

"I wish you were not going, Adriel. You'll never be quite the same to us. Your fine relations will teach you to despise us as they do!"

"If you say another word like that," cried Adriel, hotly, "I'll never forgive you, and I vow I won't go, even if Aurora tries to drag me there! Despise you! Oh, you old stupid!"

"Yes," says Biddy, meekly, "I know I am stupid, I always was; but in worldly matters I am wiser than you" (the good soul was as ignorant of such things as a baby). "And there is another danger for you, of which Aurora, with all her wisdom, is quite careless."

"And that?" questioned Adriel, languidly.

"You are sure to have lovers, and with only Lady Sandilands to guide your choice I am afraid you may choose wrongly."

Despite her recent tears and present anxiety the girl laughed merrily.

"If I am so unlucky as to have lovers I'll know how to treat them," she said, lightly. "I mean to live and die on old maid."

"Ah, dear, you'll not say so always. Love is often a curse, but more often a blessing, and old maid's life is but a sad thing at best."

Adriel sat up, and stared at her with wide eyes.

"Biddy," she said, solemnly, "tell me the truth. Was there anyone you ever loved better than Aurora or me?"

Biddy's sallow face flushed crimson, but she said, bravely,—

"Yes."

"And he died? Oh, my poor Biddy!" with genuine pity.

"No, dear; he married somebody else. He never knew or cared to know that I loved him. I don't believe he ever gave me a thought. I was always so plain and stupid," pathetically, "though I think I could love more truly, more fondly, than many a pretty and clever woman."

"Poor Biddy! poor Biddy! and he—the man you loved" (lowering her voice) "must have been blind to prefer any other woman to you. Why, you dear, you dear, every night, when I say my prayers, I thank Heaven for my two good and lovely sisters—for you are good—and to me you will always be lovely," and a hearty kiss sealed the truth of the girl's words.

CHAPTER II.

Despite her very pronounced objection to the proposed visit Adriel was too thoroughly human not to take a very hearty interest in the pretty new gown her sisters provided.

There was a white gauze one for evening wear, with crimson ribbons and a dainty white fan, on which Miss Aurora, who was clever with her brush, had painted a cluster of crimson roses. Then there was a neat grey costume for walking, and pale pink tea-gown.

The sisters were not rich, and Adriel knew they were denying themselves many things so that she, their darling, might go bravely dressed, and in her passionate gratitude hung about them half crying and wholly loving.

All her modest wardrobe was overhauled and renovated, and at the close of a fortnight Adriel was declared ready for her journey.

"My dear," Biddy said, "don't ask me to go to the station with you. I'd be sure to make a spectacle of myself. I am not so strong-minded as Aurora."

So the girl kissed and embraced her in the little hall, and mingled her tears with poor Biddy's. She had never left home before, never slept under any other roof, and this parting, for a few weeks only, was an awful wrench.

"Are you ready?" Miss Aurora asked, with a fine assumption of severity. "For shame, Biddy so to upset her. Come, Adriel."

"Good-bye, dear Biddy. I'll write you every day—and—oh! I wish I were not going!" and then Aurora hurried her away and in to the hired fly, with its wretched apology for a horse.

Miss Vinter bore herself bravely whilst she took Adriel's ticket, and looked after the safe disposal of her luggage. She even gave no sign of emotion as she kissed the girl, and saw her comfortably settled in her compartment. But when the bell rang, and all late passengers came rushing up the platform, her lips twitched ominously, and her eyes filled with sudden, irrepressible tears.

"Good-bye, Adriel," she sobbed. "Do not forget us!"

And when the train steamed out of the station the poor, lonely old maid stood watching it, wholly unconscious that tears were streaming down her faded cheeks. And when she could see it no longer, she turned away, weeping sorely and quite unaware that she was affording amusement to a porter and two giddy girls.

It seemed to her all the light and joy had gone out of her life with "child Adriel's" going—that she never could be glad or content again.

Poor old maids! They had no one else to love. She was their pride and delight, "and we have lost her," sobbed Biddy, clinging to Aurora, and Aurora had never a word to say.

That night, hand-in-hand, they stood beside Adriel's bed and spoke of her in low tones as one speaks of those who have gone before; and every day they placed fresh flowers upon her table, and carefully tended the plants

in her window box. They even offered up their simple, heartfelt petitions kneeling by her bed, and "child Adriel's" room became a sacred place to them.

It was ridiculous, of course, but it was infinitely pathetic.

My heart yearns over those two grey, lonely, simple women, living out their dull neutral-tinted lives, and pining for the sight of their darling's bright face and soft, dark eyes, the sound of her happy laughter.

Throughout her tedious journey Adriel never shed a tear. She was going to relatives she had reason to believe were hard and unsympathetic, and was too proud to show them all what this parting from home meant for her.

A bright flush burned on either cheek, and her lips were set hard to keep back the sobs that were so faint to break from them.

A handsomely-appointed carriage awaited her, and a dignified footman led the way to it; but neither her grandmother nor cousin had thought it necessary to meet her, and her heart grew harder yet against them.

The drive from the station was a short one, and on alighting another pompous servant ushered her into Lady Sandilands' presence.

She was already dressed for dinner, looking very handsome in a rich cap of Spanish lace, a black moiré velvet gown trimmed with jet and lace, with a train of black moiré lined with grey.

Casting one swift, scrutinising glance at the girl she rose, and stooping over her kissed her brow, saying in a voice slightly shaken by some repressed emotion,—

"You are like your mother. She was a beautiful girl. I hope your visit will be a pleasant one. Dart, my maid, shall attend to you this evening. To-morrow we will make some other arrangement for your comfort."

"I am unaccustomed to a maid, Lady Sandilands," said the girl.

"You must not call me that. I am your grandmother!"

"But you forgot that fact so long that I have forgotten it too," Adriel answered, feeling very rebellious and angry.

Just for the moment her ladyship looked affronted, then her handsome face softened, and laying one still beautiful hand upon the girl's shoulder, she said,—

"Let bygones be bygones, Adriel; and for your mother's sake try to forget all that seems cruel in my past conduct, and remember that I had my child's interests at heart when I acted as I did. There, I will say no more. Perhaps, when you know me well you will like me better; but I must insist that you give me my proper title. Yes, Dart, Miss Vinter is ready for you," and with that she dismissed the half-repentant, half-angry girl from her presence.

Dart, who was an artiste in her way, was delighted with her new subject. Here was proper material upon which to work, she thought, as she plaited the luxuriant chestnut hair, and coiled it about the small shapely head.

How pretty the girl was! What soft, kind eyes she had! And then she spoke so gently and was so considerate, so wishful to save the already wearied maid any unnecessary trouble.

And when all was finished Adriel felt an innocent girlish delight in her own appearance. She had never been so bravely dressed, and she had yet to learn how very simple her toilet would appear in her grandmother's fashionable circle.

Dart conducted her to the drawing-room, where Lady Sandilands was still alone. But before either could exchange a word the rustling of silken garments was heard, and, turning swiftly, Adriel saw the most perfect vision of beauty before her—a girl of some twenty years, tall and magnificently proportioned, with a beautiful dark face, and great black eyes.

One splendid diamond star blazed in the masses of raven hair, and round her throat

and wrists; at her breast the same precious stones cast out a hundred flashing lights.

She wore a gown of yellow tulle, trimmed with roses and lilies of the valley. On her left shoulder was fastened a white brocaded train, embroidered with deep gold roses.

A faint sweet smile parted the perfect lips as she saw Adriel; and advancing with languid grace, she took the girl's hands in hers, and kissed her on either cheek.

"Of course you are Adriel, and I am your cousin, Vera Garland. I am sure we shall be very good friends."

And Adriel, who had never had a girl companion, felt her heart warm towards this beautiful slow-speaking woman with the sweet, subtle smile and haunting eyes.

She had come prepared to dislike her, but now she felt all her old prejudices melting into thin air under the glamour of Vera's smile and gracious manner.

She did not know or guess that Miss Garland's insatiate love of power led her to strive for the conquest of all hearts, be they ever so humble. That she could be "all things to all men"—that she never rested until she had brought her admirers to her feet.

So Adriel smiled, and allowed herself to be made much of, unconscious that the look in her eyes, the tone of her voice, showed plainly the admiration she felt for her new friend. Such homage was as incense to Vera, because it was so thoroughly genuine.

Presently the guests began to arrive, and first amongst them came Lyon Castellain, the greatest "catch" of the season.

He was young, handsome, proud. Of pure life and name, the sole possessor of a lovely estate in Dorsetshire, and a rent-roll of ten thousand per annum. Folks said that it was more than probable he would marry Miss Garland; and one impecunious peer remarked, drawlingly, "By Gad! 'tis a shame two such colossal fortunes should be united!" a sentiment with which his friends heartily concurred.

But if Lyon had any attention of wooing Vera he had as yet given no sign. He liked and admired her as an agreeable and beautiful woman, but he went no further. It was gall and wormwood to the proud beauty to find him insensible to her charms. He was the one man who had ever touched her heart or her fancy.

But she had no fear of rivalry from her little country cousin; and as the young man joined them, said, with her slow, sweet smile,—

"I am glad you are early, Mr. Castellain, I want to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Adriel Vinter, Professor Vinter's daughter."

The blushing innocent face was very pleasant to look upon, and so Lyon seemed to think, and he was very well content that the honour of taking her into dinner devolved upon him.

"How is it?" he said, as he leaned towards her, "that I have never seen you before? I am such a constant visitor here?"

"I have never been from home until now," she answered, lifting shy eyes to the handsome proud face. "I did not in the least like coming; but Aurora said it was my duty."

"I hope it will prove your pleasure too; but—am I too inquisitive? If so, snub me. Who is Aurora?"

"Oh, I forgot you did not know. Aurora is one of my sisters, the eldest; Biddy is the other."

He looked puzzled.

"But I thought Lady Sandilands said you were her daughter's only child?" he remarked.

"Yes, that is true; but Papa had been married before, years and years before, so that my half-sisters are a great deal older than myself. I say sometimes I am very lucky, because I have two mothers," she ended with a little low laugh.

"Then they are very good to you?" interrogatively.

"Oh, more than good," warmly. "I am always their first thought. You don't know how many things they have denied themselves that I should have this holiday. We aren't rich. Indeed, I believe I have nothing of my own, that Aurora and Biddy support me entirely. Their mother had a little property."

What a very simple, unaffected creature she was! How many girls in society would make such a frank confession of poverty? How many would be so little troubled by it?

Lyon found himself smiling down upon her, and thinking a trifle sadly that she would not be quite the innocent, guileless girl she now was at the close of the season.

"From what you said awhile ago I infer you came to town against your will? Don't you like pleasure?"

"Oh, yes, when I share it with my sisters; but I did not know grandma, and—and—well, I haven't forgiven her yet for her cruelty to my mother."

"I believe Lady Sandilands has suffered much from remorse," Lyon said, gravely, "and her daughter's marriage was a great disappointment to her."

"It should not have been," retorted the young judge, severely. "All who knew papa say he was one of the noblest and cleverest of men, and that he made mamma very happy. I am proud of him. Why, he was the first wrangler of his year, and held ever so many scholarships in succession, and there is no end to the stories of his generosity."

"I should have liked to have known him."

"Thank you, Mr. Castellain; but I ought not to talk so much of myself and my belongings."

"The subject is an interesting one—to me, at least. Pray continue."

"Ah, no!" laughing merrily. "I must not make you think me an egotist. Mr. Castellain, is not my cousin beautiful?"

"Very! She reminds me of some lovely tropical bird."

"I think we shall be great friends; she is so very kind. Until we met I felt so lonely and wretched, but she placed me at my ease at once; but—but I do wish I could have my sisters here," and a shadow crossed the brightness of her face.

"You must persuade them to join you."

"I don't believe grandma would wish that, and I am quite sure they would never be induced to leave home. They have lived all their lives at Stanbury."

Hero Lady Sandilands gave the signal to rise, and Adriel followed with the other ladies, Vera joining her at once.

"Mr. Castellain and you seemed mutually pleased with each other?" she said, smiling down at the young, sweet face.

"He is very kind and nice," the girl answered simply.

"I shall have to tell him that. He will be pleased to hear your good opinion. Now, I want you to sing to us."

"No, not to-night, or any night, Vera. I am a very ordinary performer, and I am quite sure my voice would not nearly fill this huge room. But I will be glad to hear you. I should think you sing beautifully. You look as though you would."

Vera laughed good-humouredly, pleased by the girl's speech, for she really possessed a magnificent contralto. If only Lyon Castellain did not evince too great a partiality for the country cousin she was quite disposed to make much of her.

She had an opportunity of asking his opinion of Adriel later in the evening.

"Well, what is your judgment of Miss Vinter?" she asked, in her slow, sweet tones.

"She is the frankest little soul I have ever met."

"Yes; is she not? I am so glad we agree upon that."

CHAPTER III.

"My dear," said Lady Sandilands' confidential friend, a few days later, "your grandchild

is quite a success. I never saw anything more charming in its way than her simplicity and candour."

"Yes, she is simple without being stupid," answered the other, "and I am proud of her. I hope she will do better than her mother. But if one spoke of love or lovers to her she would be startled beyond measure. Her sisters seemed to have regarded her quite as a child."

"And a charming child she is! You are fortunate in having two such girls to chaperone. Vera, of course, takes the palm for beauty, but many men prefer Adriel's less brilliant style. Only last night young Mortlock, a very eligible *parti*, said in my hearing, 'By Jove! that little girl in white is just the sort to make a man's home a Paradise; a winsome, gentle, coaxing witch. If I see her often I shall lose my head over her!'"

Lady Sandilands smiled complacently, then sighed, for not all her kindness, and she was kind to her, could win child Adriel's heart, or teach her to forget the fair young mother, whose last hours had been embittered by her ladyship's stern refusal to see her.

She was obedient and anxious to please; but the grandmother's keen eyes saw that this was from a sense of duty, and that affection did not prompt those delicate little attentions which were so pleasant to receive.

Then, too, Lady Sandilands could not compel herself to talk of the simple stepsisters, living so quietly at that far-away small town. She even showed faint displeasure if Adriel spoke of them in her presence.

So it came about that the girl made a *confidante* of Vera, who encouraged her to talk of the home life, and never seemed weary of listening to stories of Aurora's goodness and Biddy's perfections; and Adriel soon learned to love her beautiful cousin next to her sisters.

"One day," said Vera, in her sweet languid tones, "you and I will go together to Stanbury, so that I may make acquaintance with the Misses Vinter. I only hope they will like me as much as I am prepared to like them. Indeed, I look upon them already as my cousins."

"Dear Vera," answered Adriel, affectionately, "they will love you because you have been so good to me!"

"Nonsense," said Vera; "you are grateful for nothing. Now what are you going to do? Why are you running away?"

"I must write my home letter. Aurora and Biddy would think I was ill if I neglected to do so, and they would be sick with anxiety from post to post. I believe they would telegraph to know the reason for my silence."

"I positively believe you write every other day!"

"I do, and when I can snatch a moment I run up and add a line or two to my letter until it is time to send it off; so that it grows into a kind of journal, and they know what I am doing from hour to hour. That seems to shorten the distance between us; for, oh! I do miss them, much as I am enjoying myself, much as I care for you."

And when she was gone, Miss Garland sat with a thoughtful look upon her beautiful face, an almost sombre expression in her deep dark eyes. But she rose presently with an impatient gesture.

"I am stupid to fancy such a thing! What man would give the preference to her when I was near? She is pretty, but—" and an expressive glance in the opposite mirror rounded the sentence completely.

Adriel's letter was finished and posted by her own hands. She never entrusted one of those bulky epistles to any of the servants.

"They might forget," she said, "and I won't have my sisters think I am careless of them."

She knew as well as though she had been there to see them, how, three mornings in the week, the sisters would stand watching behind the parlour curtains for the advent of the old postman; and if eight o'clock brought no news long, long before the second post came

in they would be waiting with anxious eyes and beating hearts for a line from their darling.

How could she disappoint them? There were only two posts at Stanbury, the one at eight a.m., the other at two p.m.; and she never missed the first if she could possibly help it.

She told them all about her lovely cousin, until her simple sisters loved Vera almost as well as Adriel did. She hid nothing from them save her frequent meetings with Lyon Castellain and his continuous kindness.

Perhaps she was hardly conscious of supposing these things; but after her first meeting with him she had never mentioned his name, and Aurora hoped that "child Adriel" would return to them loverless; but Biddy was indignant that men should be so blind to the little one's charms.

Small as their knowledge was of Lyon Castellain he knew all that Adriel could tell of them, save Biddy's sad little love story; they almost seemed personal friends of his, the girl described them so faithfully and lovingly. He knew, too, how simple was their mode of life, how unpretentious their home, for Adriel had sketched the cottage, and shown her work to him.

He was a proud man, but not in the ordinary sense of the word. He was proud of his integrity, his stainless honour, his ancient name, but he did not exalt himself because of his riches or his position. They were pleasant accidents he would say laughingly, and he would choose his wife as he listed, only insisting that she should be a lady and a good woman. He cared nothing about her possessions. She might be the veriest pauper in the world so that she satisfied him in other things, and loved him before and beyond all.

He saw Adriel, and she charmed him. She fulfilled all his conditions and by-and-by he came to love her with the one love of his life—the love that was to embitter all his after years, and to break that gentle, guileless heart so freely given into his keeping.

"I used to think, Vera," said her grandmother one morning, when Adriel was engaged with her "home" letter, "I really used to think that Lyon Castellain admired you, and intended asking you the momentous question; but it appears I was mistaken. He is devoted to Adriel."

Miss Garland yawned.

"We were never anything more than friends, and Adriel is a dear little thing. I wonder how we existed so long without her. It will be an excellent match for her."

"Yes; and I should like to see her well settled. She will have next to nothing when her sisters die; and as for you, Vera, you can well afford to marry a poor man. The Earl of Elster is only waiting an opportunity to propose. His family is as old as the hills; he is young, fairly good-looking—"

"And as stupid as he possibly can be. My dear grandmamma, don't be in so great a hurry to rid yourself of me—and don't set your affections upon a title. In all probability, I shall marry a commoner." And then she laughed a little, as she stooped and kissed the woman who had spoiled and petted her all her youth upwards. "I am very happy with you. Let us remain as we are for a little while."

And Lady Sandilands returned the kiss with fervour, saying,—

"I wish that Adriel could love me as you do. I should be a happy woman then."

"You could hardly hope for that, remembering her past associations; and no doubt those dear old maids, good and gentle as they are, do not feel too kindly disposed towards you. Then, too, Adriel has known you only a few weeks, all my life long."

Lady Sandilands sighed. She was growing old, and many things in her past life troubled her. She wished now, as she had never wished before, that she had forgiven her hap-

less daughter, and taken her child earlier into her home and heart."

"But in time she must love me," she thought, "if I am very patient and gentle with her. She has her mother's nature, and Gertrude was never hard or unforgiving."

The days and weeks flew by and Lyon Castellain was a constant visitor at Palace-gardens.

At first Vera tried to believe she was the attraction, but she could not long blind herself to the fact that Adriel, her simple little cousin, had won the prize she longed for.

But she gave no sign of the bitter pain and humiliation she suffered. She bore herself just as proudly to the world, just as affectionately towards her unconscious rival.

No one guessed what she suffered, no one dreamt what a madness of anger and hate possessed her.

"I loved him first," she thought, bitterly. "Shall she steal him away? Shall he be the only man to resist me when I choose to woo? She shall not have him. I love him! love him! love him! and he only can make me a good woman. I will not give him to her!"

Still Lyon came and went; and one day, to his great satisfaction, he found Adriel alone. She was fatigued by the previous night's pleasure; and as she had a somewhat important engagement for the following evening, Lady Sandilands had wisely determined she should not accompany herself and Vera on their shopping expedition.

The girl rose quickly from her couch as Lyon was announced, and her face flushed warmly.

"I do not know if I ought to receive you, Mr. Castellain," she said in confusion. "Grandmamma and Vera are out. If I were at home it would be different!"

"As how?" he questioned, smiling down upon her.

"Oh, we are not ceremonious people, and all who call have a claim upon our hospitality."

"You must be a delightful house to visit; but I think I may safely assure you that Lady Sandilands will not be angry when you tell her I stayed to enliven your solitude. I am a favourite with her."

"I know, and you ought to be proud. Grandmamma has so few favourites," said Adriel, seating herself at a distance from him. But this arrangement did not please him, and he coolly walked to her side, sinking into a chair which was placed so nicely that he could see every varying shade and light upon her face.

"You did not expect me to sustain conversation at such an enormous distance from you, did you?" he asked, quietly.

"Were you so very far away?" she answered with averted face. "Your voice sounded quite distinctly, and every word you uttered was audible."

"Shall I return to my old position? I will if you have the heart to banish me, but it is like being at the Antipodes! May I stay?"

She hesitated, blushed, toyed with the laces on her gown, then said, with what she hoped was a fine assumption of ease—

"Of course, Mr. Castellain, you will please yourself; grandmamma likes her guests to study their own wishes."

"Then I shall remain here," promptly. "I would not miss one moment of this good time, because it will end so soon. Miss Vinter what are you going to do when the season closes?"

"I shall return to Stanbury and my sisters."

"I hope not; I want to prevail upon Lady Sandilands and your cousin to bring you down to my place. It is just at its best now."

"I have been so long from home already," Adriel said, uncertainly, because all her heart cried out to be near him, to obey his lightest wish. "I should not be justified in accepting your invitation. They—my sisters—have unshaken.

mised me so sorely, and I want to see them too."

"So do I! Won't you understand that I wish them to swell our little party, that for your sake I am anxious they should know and approve me. Adriel, will you come as my promised wife? Darling, I love you, and I am vain enough to hope you care for me a little. Is it so?"

She was trembling greatly, but she controlled herself sufficiently to say,

"Are you quite, quite sure you mean this; and that you will never be ashamed of Aurora and Biddy, because they are not rich or grand? That you will never be sorry, because I am simple and poor?"

He held out his hands to her—

"Your people shall be my people. If you love me, lay your hands in mine, and Heaven knows you shall never regret so doing."

With a swift, impulsive movement, the girl obeyed, only to find herself drawn into a close embrace, to hear that dear voice say,

"You do love me, little one. Tell me it over and over again; it seems too good to be true. Adriel, you really mean you have given yourself to me?"

The lovely limpid eyes met his. They were full of love and trust. In the years that were to follow he would remember the expression they wore in this hour, and wonder, with an awful heartache and remorse, how he could ever have doubted the tale they told.

"You have never cared for any but me?" he asked, jealously.

"Oh, no!" she whispered. "Don't you understand, Lyon, how one soul can have but one love? Ah, how shall I tell them at home? They will be grieved to learn how soon a stranger could supplant them. I cannot bear to think how they will grieve."

"Your sisters shall share our home," Lyon said, with all the generosity of a newly-declared lover. "I would not separate you for worlds; and already I have a personal affection for those who have made you what you are, only I feel absurdly inclined to think of them as maiden aunts, not sisters, the disparity in your ages is so great. As for acquainting them with the news, that shall be my proud duty; and I suppose I must see Lady Sandilands too. Etiquette should have led me first to her, but I am afraid I prefer to act in an unconventional style."

And then he held her a little from him that he might the better see her face—that downcast, blushing, happy face, which he was to remember all through his life, which would rise to reproach him at all seasons. Alas! alas! that this should be!

But now, as he drew her near again, there was no premonition of woe with him. He loved her, and she was his very own. And as he stooped to kiss her tremulous, happy lips of her own free will, she laid her arms about his neck, and said, under her breath,—

"Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! I love you with all my life!" And then she wept a little, as one whose heart is weighed down with its burden of happiness.

When Lady Sandilands and Vera returned Lyon was gone, and a servant informed the former that Miss Vinter was in her room, whether she had retired with that convenient malady—a headache.

The fact was Adriel could not confront her relatives in the first flush of her joy lest she should betray herself.

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Sandilands was delighted with the match.

"It is just as it should be," she said to Vera. "Adriel could not afford to marry a poor man. I am very proud of her success!"

Miss Garland was standing looking out of a window, and the expression of her face was hidden, from her grandmother's keen eyes. From the tone of her voice as she replied one could guess nothing—it was so quiet, so unshaken.

"Adriel is very fortunate. I am half inclined to be envious. The child is a general favourite. I suppose I ought to congratulate her—I have not done so yet"; and just at that moment the girl entered.

Her engagement was only twenty-four hours' old, but already Lyon's ring sparkled and flashed upon one slender finger. It was the more conspicuous because, until now, Adriel's hands had been guiltless of ornaments.

Vera, turning quickly, caught the flash of diamonds, saw the happy, smiling face, and went forward with that slow, gliding step peculiar to her.

"You most lucky of girls!" she said, gaily. "I give you my best wishes, and hope you will be as happy as love and wealth can make you!" and then she kissed the innocent lips and touched the bright hair caressingly. "I have been telling grandmamma I almost envy you. Lyon Castellain is such a 'knightly man and true'!"

"Thank you, Vera," Adriel said, simply. "I knew you would be glad to hear of my great happiness. Oh! what a very lucky girl I am to find so many to love me!" and she clung affectionately to the stately beauty. "I never knew how good it was to have a girl-friend until I met you, dear cousin. Grandmamma, you will not forbid Vera to spend a few days at Stanbury with me?"

"No!" said Lady Sandilands; and she half hoped Adriel would include her in the invitation (it was curious how tender she was growing towards the child); but Adriel never dreamed of doing so, fully believing she would meet with a flat refusal.

That night, when Lyon was gone, her ladyship called Adriel to her side.

"Sit here, by me, child; I want to talk to you. You are very, very happy, and your happiness should make you compassionate and tender towards an old and lonely woman. For your mother's sake forgive the past, and try to care a little for one who holds you very dear."

Adriel was silent a moment, and Lady Sandilands half feared she had humbled herself in vain; but presently the girl turned to her with outstretched hands.

"I have tried hard to hate you," she said, with childish candour, "but I can't; and because mamma would wish it, and because of your goodness to me, I will try to be your dutiful and loving grandchild. I don't think the lesson will be hard to learn."

Her ladyship stooped and kissed the smooth, white brow.

"Ah, child!" she said, "if only I had been kinder to your mother!"

"Mamma was very happy, my sisters say," answered Adriel. "You see, papa worshipped her, and when she died he did not care to live longer; so he simply lost all interest in all things, and gradually he pined away and died. I don't like to hear people scoff at broken hearts—for his broke, in very deed and truth."

She was speaking dreamily, and her eyes shadowed by her thoughts.

"I think," she went on, in the same low tone, "if I lost anyone who was very near and dear to me by falsehood or death the shock of my loss would kill me."

(Child Adriel! Child Adriel! what was it made you speak in such a prophetic way? Surely the shadow of the sorrow to come must have lain, if ever so lightly, upon you even then!)

"You need fear no such calamity as loss of Lyon," smiled her ladyship. "He is devoted to you, and deceit is unknown to him."

"But I spoke of death, too, grandmamma. No one can guard against that." And then she rose, and shaking herself as though to divest herself of sombre thoughts, she kissed her grandmother more affectionately than she had ever yet done, and went up to her room, there to dream those happy dreams which, alas! might never be fulfilled.

The following day Lyon went down to Stanbury; and finding the quaint, old-fashioned

house, inquired for the Misses Vauter, saying that he brought a message from Miss Adriel. He was instantly admitted.

The sisters were a new experience to him—so unfashionable and unaffected, yet so palpably ladies, that the veriest snob would not have questioned their right to the title. They received him with old-world hospitality; and the fact that the great match child Adriel was about to make caused them more of sorrow than pleasure did not decrease Lyon's respect and liking for them.

They were charming, he decided, and he was lucky in securing one of such an amiable family.

He begged that Adriel might go down to his country seat in company with her relatives. To this they readily consented, although tears were not far from their eyes as they remembered this visit would take their darling still further from them.

But when he begged they would swell the party they most emphatically declined, pleading they were so unused to society that they would be utterly out of their element; and ending with an entreaty that he would bring Adriel to them at the close of the month, and remain himself, that they might grow familiar with this new member of their little family.

Lyon Castellain returned to town well pleased with his prospective relatives, and the following week the little party at Palace-gardens migrated to Dorsetshire—Adriel in the gayest spirits, unsuspicous of evil, wholly careless of what the future might hold because the present was so bright.

The Earl of Elster made one of the company, and Vera treated him with alternate graciousness and haughty indifference, until the poor, stupid, but honest-hearted gentleman was driven almost to despair.

"I can't tell what she thinks of me," he said pathetically to Lyon. "One day she is kind, and I hope; but the next, nothing I say or do pleases her."

"Faint heart never won fair lady," quoted Lyon with a smile, "and you must make some allowance for the caprices of beauty. You are not Miss Garkland's only lover, and perhaps she is just putting you to the test."

"I wish," answered the youthful Earl, with a sigh, "I wish you would sound her. She might, perhaps, tell you the true state of her feelings. I know she likes and esteems you, for she told me so."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, old fellow! It doesn't seem fair to the lady," Lyon said; but on the morrow, finding Vera alone, he thought it an excellent opportunity to speak to her of her treatment of her luckless lover. She had been unusually capricious throughout the morning, and Elster had gone out, in a half frantic state.

"Do you think you are treating that poor beggar quite kindly, Vera?" he asked, lounging in a chair close by her. "He is in a fine frenzy. It seems to me, young lady, it is your especial delight to torture your hapless victim."

She bent her dark, inscrutable eyes on him. "Has he been complaining? He has his remedy. Let him take it."

The words were cruel, but the voice was soft and alluring.

"You mean that you will not entertain the proposal he is longing to make?"

She raised her head high.

"Has he sent you as his ambassador? Would you wish to see me, mated to a don?" she asked, swiftly. "I hoped that you were my friend, that at least you wished me happiness," and then she panted with flushing eyes and heaving bosom; and he, distressed at her emotion, went to her side.

"Vera," he said, apologetically, "you cannot think for a moment I meant to hurt you? Surely you know that for your own sake and Adriel's you are dear to me, and that I have quite a brother's interest in you? I am well aware Elster is not brilliant, but he is a very honest fellow."

"Pray do not urge his merits further," she

retorted, and, snatching her hand from his, hurried from the room, leaving Lyon perplexed and a little annoyed with himself for his intercession on the Earl's behalf.

"Why couldn't he speak himself?" he thought. "And who was to guess that the belle of the season possessed a heart? I had an idea always that she was rather moroseness. For once my discrimination is at fault: Well, Adriel will make my peace with her," and then he dismissed Vera and the whole subject from his mind, until the morrow, when Elster, almost in tears, bade him good-bye, saying lamentably, he had lost all pleasure in life since the beautiful Vera turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

The girl herself gave no sign that she remembered the scene of the previous day, but was careless and unconcerned in her manner, as was her wont.

And on the following day Lyon saw no change in her, only Adriel knew there was some cloud upon the beauty's sky. Once or twice she had come unexpectedly upon her, to find her reading a letter, with a frowning brow and troubled face, but she had not ventured to question her as to the cause of her disquiet.

She had gone to rest one night, and was lying thinking happy thoughts of Lyon when a light tap came at her door, and, in answer to her "come in," Vera entered.

There was a bright flush upon her cheek, and her eyes shone like stars, as she came forward with one finger upon her lip, as though to enjoin silence.

"Hush!" she said, in a whisper, "grandma is in her room; and if she hears us talking will wonder and question us what we had to say to each other, that she might not know. Adriel, I want your advice and help."

"My advice isn't worth much," laughed Adriel, "but such as it is you shall have it; and, of course, if I can help you in anything, I shall be proud and glad."

"You are a dear little soul; the fact is, I am in a peck of trouble, and hardly know what to do for the best. Read this," handing her a note, "and then tell me what to do."

It was written in a good, bold handwriting, and, if short, was certainly to the point.

"You cruel, beautiful darling, how long will you torture me, and banish me from you? You say you love me. Give me some proof of this! I cannot rest, I cannot work; all my soul is filled with the fear of losing you. To-day I heard your name coupled with that of my most formidable rival. Vera, you shall not marry him or any but me. On Friday I shall follow you to Castellain House. If I do not meet you in the grounds by noon I shall come to the house. Suspense I will bear no longer."

"MARSTON RUE."

"What does it mean?" asked Adriel, sitting erect. "And who is Mr. Marston Rue?"

"It means that I am secretly engaged, and to the writer of this note," Vera answered, with averted face.

"This then, is the reason why you were so cold to the poor Earl! But, Vera, why don't you acknowledge the engagement, and save both yourself and Mr. Rue anxiety?"

"Because grandmamma has refused to sanction it, as Mr. Rue is not my equal, either in rank or wealth. He is a struggling artist, without any influence; and I, you know, am entirely under her ladyship's control until my twenty-third birthday. She has even power, if she chooses, to stop my allowance; and how can we marry on nothing? Marston must be patient and cautious. If only grandmamma suspected he was coming here she would send me away at once, and exile is so ignominious. Adriel, I want you to meet Mr. Rue for me!"

"I? Oh, Vera! Surely you do not mean this? You will not send your unfortunate lover away without seeing him?"

"I must!" Vera answered, sadly. "I know so well with what entreaties he will come primed, and—and I love him so that I am as wax in his hands. He would persuade and

I should yield; consent to a hasty marriage, and I should drag him down—work misery for us both. I can't do it! I won't! But you, dear, you will tell him all I say, and assure him of my love."

"Why not write?" asked Adriel, practically.

"Because it is safer to send messages by word of mouth; but if, Adriel, you will not oblige me at so small a cost to yourself, I have no more to say, only I thought you loved me, and would help me," and she rose with her powdered air, and made as though to go.

"Stay," cried Adriel. "Dear Vera, you are wronging me, indeed! I hesitated only because I do not like to deceive grandmamma, but I will do anything you wish."

"Thank you, oh! thank you a thousand times! I would not trouble you, but there is no other to whom I could apply. And you will tell no one of this affair, or your part in it?"

"Not even Lyon?"

"Least of all Lyon. He is so very scrupulous; he would go at once to grandmamma and tell her all. You promise secrecy most solemnly?"

"You may trust me, Vera," but a sudden sense of trouble oppressed her,

CHAPTER V.

On the following Friday, as luck would have it, Lyon begged Adriel to ride with him to a neighbouring village; and she, with an air of confusion, refused, much to his chagrin; and to make matters worse, Lady Sandilands looked up from her letters to say—

"My dear child, there is no possible reason why you should not go! You have no prior engagement. Run and put on your habit."

"I would rather not, grandmamma, thank you. Lyon, dear, there is something I wish especially to do this morning. You will excuse me. To-morrow if you care to—"

"To-morrow!" he interrupted, huffily, "will not do. I really cannot postpone my business; but pray do not alter your engagements to suit my convenience."

The girl's face flushed distressfully, and she glanced at Vera appealingly; but that young lady was apparently absorbed in her correspondence, and seemed not to notice the storminess of the atmosphere.

"Really, Lyon, I would like to go, but I cannot."

"Pray say no more on the subject," coldly, and he went from the room, with head erect, and angry eyes.

"Why, Adriel," said her ladyship, "what is the very important engagement of which I am quite ignorant?"

"I cannot tell you now," the girl answered, uncertainly, and with her face steadily averted lest the other should see her tears; "but you will know some day!"

"I dislike mysteries exceedingly, Adriel," was the cold reply, and she vouchsafed no other word. The child was wretched; all through her little life she had never had a harsh word or unkind look, and the warm, young heart felt like to break.

"Oh, Vera!" she said, as soon as they were alone. "You must let me tell all to Lyon. I cannot bear to make him angry. Grandmamma's displeasure I can bear, but not his!"

"Please yourself," Vera answered, coldly. "but I always thought a promise was a sacred thing. If a frown from Lyon will make you break your word I am sorry I ever trusted you."

"Say no more," Adriel cried, quickly. "After such a remark as yours I would die rather than fail you. If trouble comes of it I trust to your generosity to clear me of blame; but I will speak no word in my own behalf."

Then Vera, seeing that she had gone too far, and that this little cousin of hers was not devoid of spirit, put her arms about her, and kissed her tenderly.

"I am ashamed of myself for my unkind words; and so sorry that I have vexed you; only—only, when one's whole life happiness is at stake, one is apt to be a trifle selfish. And when Lyon returns the cloud will have blown over. He will have forgotten his displeasure and its cause."

"And I spoke more hastily than I should have done, only I was a little sore at heart," Adriel answered, with quick generosity, and so they "made friends" again.

A little before noon the girl started upon her errand, charged with many messages from Vera, and an entreaty that her lover would at once return to town and await news from her; not to risk discovery by remaining in the neighbourhood of Castellain House. And Vera watched her go with a strange, cruel smile upon her perfect lips.

"Phoo! fool!" she said, laughing lowly. "Puppet of my will! If you only knew! if you only knew! I could have liked you well had you not come between me and my desire; and now—ah! now I could kill you rather than see you his wife!" Her face was awful to see as she spoke those words; but the paroxysm of rage passed, and she sat down in a low chair, and with hands lightly folded gave herself up to thoughts of the past. She had been foolish to go quite so far with Marston, but she had not foreseen how troublesome he would be; and of course when she chose she could crush him at a blow.

He was a portrait painter, and had been introduced to Lady Sandilands and her granddaughter by a celebrated art critic. He was proud and glad to accept the order. And Miss Garland thought it pleasant occupation for her leisure moments to bring him to her feet.

It was not a hard task. The poor lad—he was little more—was an enthusiast; and he idealised this lovely, gracious girl, "with her sweet eyes and low replies," and in spirit worshipped the idol he had created.

The portrait finished was exhibited at the Academy, and pronounced exquisite.

Vera Garland became a notoriety. And then, flushed with success, mad with love, and full of dreams of a glorious future, Marston Race ventured to tell his passion.

Vera was flattered, although in her heart she laughed at the poor enthusiast, and in her insatiable lust of conquest determined to hold this new victim hard and fast until he was no longer useful or amusing to her.

She half confessed she returned his passion. She played his secrecy and patience, urging that Lady Sandilands had discovered their mutual attachment, and threatened to exert her authority over her, Vera, unless she promised to dismiss her ineligible lover at once and for ever.

And the poor artist believed this story, fretted and fumed over his poverty, grew restless in his ways and moods, uncertain in his movements.

The one great passion of his life consumed him, and for him, "joy was not, but love of joy should be."

"Lyon will be returning soon," said Vera to herself. "Now may the fates be propitious! If only he sees Adriel with Marston the rest is easy. He is jealous, and she is proud. Oh, to think that I should use one lover to win the other!" and again her soft, cruel laugh rang out.

She had no pity for any but herself, not love for any but Lyon.

And alas! alas! her wish was to be fulfilled. Riding slowly through the grounds on his return journey, at a little distance from him, half hidden by the shrubs, he saw two figures. The one was Adriel's, the other that of a man unknown to him.

A rush of jealous rage and suspicion came upon him, and reigning in his horse he watched the unconscious pair.

The girl was talking quickly and earnestly, using those pretty little gestures he knew so

well, and the man with his head bent seemed listening attentively.

Lyon's heart was like fire in his breast; there was almost murder in his thoughts. That she! "Child Adriel," his little innocent, seeming love, could so deceive him! Great Heaven! was any woman true? If he could but hear their words! And then, as he waited and watched, the man lifted one of Adrian's small hands to his lips, and she showed no anger, although she drew it somewhat quickly away. Still she bade him a kindly farewell, and Lyon, watching him go, wished that he had failed him where he stood.

Adriel remained motionless, her eyes following that retreating figure, until Lyon, dismounting, led his horse towards her.

She heard the sound of the hoofs upon the hard ground, and turning, saw her lover. The frowning brow and angry eyes told her that she was discovered.

In her dismay and distress, she could not move, she could not speak, only her fair face flushed hotly; and all these signs were as proofs of her guilt to her jealous lover.

"I understand now," he said, icily, "why you would not accompany me this morning! But it was hardly judicious to allow my rival an interview in my grounds."

Dumb she stood, too hurt by his suspicion for speech to be easy, and he went on,—

"I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of such heartless treachery. Great Heaven! that you could be so false, who seemed so true! Girl, it is my wealth that has tempted you! Ah, curses on it! As a poor man I might have been happy!"

She ventured then to stretch out one hand to him, but he would not clasp or touch it; and with a little sob she let it fall to her side. Then she said in a broken voice,—

"Lyon, you are wronging me. Ah! dear, be patient, and I will tell you all. In nothing have I deceived or sinned against you. Do not be hard" (as he looked incredulously). "I am speaking nothing but the truth, and I shall soon be able to satisfy you of that."

"Satisfy me now," he demanded. "I have a right to ask so much."

"You must wait until to-night," she answered. "I will tell you all then. Take me into the fernery after dinner."

"Why not make a clean breast of the affair now?" he asked sharply. "Who is the fellow? How and where did you first meet him?"

"I am bound to silence by a promise, but this evening I shall be released from it, and I will hide nothing from you. The secret is not my own. I have no personal secrets from you. Lyon, dear, you believe me, don't you?" and she lifted her sweet, small face to him in earnest pleading.

"I don't know what to believe," moodily; "but I will pass no judgment on you until I have heard what account you can give of your proceedings this evening. Does Lady Sandilands know of your acquaintance with this—this—or—gentleman?"

"No."

"How long have you known him?" mercifully.

"Only quite recently," she answered, faintly.

"A month ago?" he demanded.

"No."

"And yet you allow him to kiss your hand, grant him private meetings! What am I to understand from this?"

She flashed upon him then.—

"To-night you will be sorry that you ever suspected me so vilely, or insulted me so grossly."

"I am waiting to be convinced," and with that he turned and left her standing in the open way.

Agh! never in the dreary future could he forget her face as then he saw it—so white, so drawn, so reproachful. At that moment, alas! alas! he only thought what a finished actress she was.

Blindly she made her way back to the house. This was their first quarrel, the first hint she had of the bitterness of love. Before she had only tasted its sweetness; and to the tender, inexperienced girl it seemed that she should die of this strange, cruel pain; that never any more would she be glad because Lyon had once doubted her truth and her devotion.

Vera, watching for her coming, felt all her pulses throb exultantly, as the raw Lyon returning alone, and evidently sorely vexed.

Later, with lagging steps, came "child Adriel," very white and very weary, as though spent with a long journey; and the cruel, beautiful watcher laughed ever so softly as she waited for her coming.

At last she heard the light, slow step upon the stairs, the touch of Adriel's hand upon the door, and went forward eagerly to meet her.

"What has happened?" she cried, with affectionate solicitude. "My dearest, how ill you look! And what did Marston say? Was he reasonable? Tell me all—unless you are too ill!"

"Oh, Vera!" cried the other pitifully, "he saw us together—Lyon, I mean; and he thinks—he thinks that I stole out to keep an appointment with a clandestine lover, as though any lady would so far forget what was due to herself." Vera winced, she was not guiltless of such an offence. "We—we quarrelled, and he said very cruel words to me."

"What answer did you make to his accusations?" asked Vera, quickly, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes bright. "Did you tell him the truth, or part of the truth?"

"I told him nothing," answered Adriel wearily. "But I promised he should know to-night."

"Ah, no! no!" cried Vera, falling on her knees, and grasping her cousin's skirts. "Not to-night for my sake, for my sake. Be silent a little longer, and all my life I will be grateful to you. In a few days I shall be gone. I have made up my mind at last—and when I am Marston's wife Lyon will know all. Adriel! you will not betray me now?" and she clung with strong hands about her, and she seemed to weep.

The girl was sorely distressed. She was fain to serve her cousin, who had always been so good to her; but she owed a duty to Lyon. Moreover, she did think Vera a little selfish.

So she wavered and hesitated, and Vera, fearful lest she should fail in her plans even now, sobbed heavily,—

"You, who are happy in your love, should have mercy on one less fortunate. After all, it is a little thing I ask, and you can easily prevail upon Lyon to wait a few days for your explanation. If not, why I myself will tell him all—even though by so doing I spoil every chance of happiness for myself. He cannot be long angry with yo. Adriel, dear, dear Adriel, I leave my fate in your hands!"

What match is the dove to the serpent in cunning? What hope was there for Adriel when opposed to such an antagonist as Vera? With a heavy sigh, she laid her arms about her cousin's shoulders.

"Dear, I will try to bear this pain for your sake!"

And with that, she gently kissed the beautiful false mouth, and seemed to listen a moment to the apparently heartfelt thanks, spoken in a sweet, shaken voice; then she crept like a hurt thing out of the room up to the privacy of her own, and flinging herself down upon her bed, shed the bitterest tears that had ever dimmed her young eyes.

She did not go down again until the dinner-bell rang, and then she looked so ill and weary that Lyon's heart began to relent towards her, and he longed ardently for the moment of her reconciliation.

But Lady Sandilands was seriously annoyed with her grandchild, and showed this by her studied politeness and frigid bearing.

CHAPTER VI.

"Well, Adriel, I am waiting for your explanation!" began Lyon, when he had carefully closed the fernery door behind him.

"Forgive me!" she answered, almost weeping. "I have none to give."

And he hardened himself against her.

"You are a trifling inconsistent," he said, icily. "This morning you promised to clear up this mystery; to-night you declare you have nothing to say. Pray, which statement am I to accept?"

"Lyon," she faltered, "it is not that I could not clear myself if I were at liberty to do so; but I told you before, I am bound by a promise—the one to whom I made it will not release me yet. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! have patience with me! I—I cannot bear your anger."

"I have just cause to be angry," he retorted. "I should be less than a man were I not. Do you suppose it can be pleasant to me to know that my promised wife is holding secret meetings with some fellow who dare not, for his own reasons, present himself at my house? Do you love him? Did you ever love him?"

And then he caught her hands in a close and almost cruel grip, whilst he looked searching into her eyes.

"I love no one but you," she said, simply, "and you are my only lover!"

Her words only added to the mystery; he never thought of connecting Vera with it. The beauty was too proud to compromise herself with an ineligible lover. So he dropped Adriel's hands and said,

"If you are speaking truth, Heaven forgive my doubts. If you are lying to me, I shall soon know—and I never pardon deceit—systematic deceit. I will not urge you further to explain now, but I do insist that you promise never to see or speak with this fellow again."

"I cannot even do that. I gave him my word to meet him to-morrow, but after that I will obey your wish. Lyon! oh, my dear Lyon! you may trust me, indeed you may. I love you too well to sin against you, as you think I am sinning. Do not let us part in anger to-night. I—I cannot bear it."

He turned and looked at her; her small sweet face was white as the gown she wore, and tears were raining down her cheeks; the childish, lovely mouth was tremulous with grief. He doubted her still—but he loved her well, and her tears broke down his pride.

He caught her suddenly to his breast.

"If you are deceiving me, as Heaven is above us, I never will forgive you! For I love you—I love you with every heart-throb. You are more to me than aught else I possess, and my life will be good or evil as you deal with me. Not any other woman could have prevailed upon me to do her bidding or wait her pleasure in such a matter as this. Oh, love! my little love, be true!"

"In three days," she said, clinging to him, and weeping now for joy at his tenderness. "I shall hold myself absolved of my vow; and then—then I think you will regret a little that you were so hasty to condemn me. For the present, try to trust me more; for, surely, if perfect love casts out fear, it should leave no room for doubt."

"Oh! in after days how he would remember her innocent, earnest words. How she tried to smile at her uttered them, and with what fond hands she clung about him.

"Kiss me!" she said, as they turned to quit the fernery. "Kiss me good-night here—I am going to my room!"

And that was the last kiss he would ever give her until—until she had almost escaped from beyond his love, and all his regrets would be in vain; when his self-reproaches would be as scorpions to sting and scourge him!

That night Adriel slept happily, rising in the morning refreshed and bright. She had told Vera her decision, and Miss Garland had said,

"I cannot expect further help from you, Adriel. You have been most good to me. At

the close of three days you may tell Lyon all. Give this note to Marston, and beg him to send me a wee line by you in return. I am in sore need of comfort and assistance."

And when she was alone Vera paced up and down, up and down her room, with white face and clenched hands.

"What shall I do? What shall I do? Only three days in which to accomplish my purpose! If the next move fails he is lost to me—lost! and I love him as she never could! I will not give him to her! Oh, Lyon! Lyon! Lyon!" she wailed with outstretched, yearning hands. "Can you not love me a little since I love you so much?"

Adriel sped on her errand, glad to think she would not be called upon to meet Marston again. The young painter was waiting for her and advanced eagerly to meet her.

"I have brought you a note," she said, gently, "and Vera begs you will entrust me with a written message. She is very depressed and none but you can offer her comfort!"

The fair, handsome face flushed with passionate love, and the joy of believing his capricious darling had succumbed at last to his entreaties.

"Miss Vinter," he said, quickly, "if only Vera will marry me at once she shall never have a moment of wretchedness that I can avert."

"I can readily believe that," in the same gentle tone. "Now, if you please, you will write your reply. I must get back quickly."

"I will not detain you long; but—forgive me—I heard that Lady Sandilands had brought Vera here that Mr. Castellain might have a chance of proposing for her hand—that he was madly devoted to her."

"Your informant was altogether mistaken," with pretty dignity. "It is I who have the honour to be Mr. Castellain's chosen wife!"

"Thank you a thousand times for your confidence. You have allayed some very cruel doubts"; and then he wrote a few lines on a page from his pocket-book, and, folding it, entrusted it to the girl, saying, "When shall I see you again?"

"I do not know. I cannot consent to carry messages to and fro thus, and—Mr. Castellain objects. I think your best course would be to take matters into your own hands—and I wish you and Vera all the happiness I could desire for myself." Then she gave him her hand timidly; and presently went away, a gracious, gentle little figure, and in his heart the happy lover blessed her.

By tacit consent Lyon and Adriel avoided each other, fought shy of any *étre à être*. Each was constrained; each felt that it was better to stand aloof until the explanation had been given and accepted. Lady Sandilands regarded her granddaughter with displeasure, and altogether the atmosphere of the house was unpleasant.

On the second evening, Adriel, wishing to escape the discomfort of her ladyship's severe presence, declared herself tired, and begged to be allowed to retire to her room.

"Pray do as you please," answered the elder lady. "I myself am weary, and shall be glad to precede you." With which she gathered her sumptuous skirts about her and went loftily out.

"Good-night," Adriel said, just touching Lyon's hand. He was looking cross and bored; and then she moved towards the door, followed by Vera.

"Good-night, dear," said the latter. "Sleep well and have happy dreams," and she kissed the fair pale face, which after to-night should never be glad or bright again. Then closing the door upon the girl, she moved near the table, saying—

"Well, Lyon, I suppose I, too, must retire, although I am not in the least bit weary." Then she stooped, and picking up a folded paper with a light laugh, remarked, "Adriel is really too careless of your *billet doux*. I will give it back to the writer," and she handed Marston's note to him.

He flushed crimson.

"I never remember writing on such paper as this!" he said.

"Lovers are proverbially forgetful," smiled Miss Garland, "but I think it is useless to deny the authorship of this. Presently Adriel will come down to look for her lost treasure, because, like all romantic girls, she sleeps with her latest love-letter under her pillow. Good night, Lyon," and then she, too, went away—but not to sleep, for on this last throw depended, or seemed to depend, all the joy of her future. And Lyon sat staring at the little folded note Vera had flung down so cunningly, and discovered so naturally.

He felt sure that he had never seen it before. He knew he was doing a dishonourable thing, as little by little his hand closed over it. He breathed hard; his colour came and went. He had always been upright and honest in his dealings, but now a sudden temptation assailed him; and, arguing that it was his right to satisfy himself as to the authorship of the note, he slowly unfolded it. It was dated for that very day, and ran thus:

"MY DARLING,—

"You ask me for help and comfort. Come to me, and, by Heaven's grace, I will give you both. Let us go away together, and I will work for my wife as I know I can work. I only need your dear presence to inspire me. The knowledge that Lyon Castellain is nothing to you has removed a heavy weight from my heart. My beautiful darling, let us delay no longer. Let us take our fates into our own hands; you shall never regret reposing so much trust in your loving. M. R."

The note dropped from Lyon's hand. This, then, was the woman he had loved and trusted—the guileless girl who had wept at his reproaches, who had sworn that her life had but one love, and he was that love. He almost cursed her in that hour—the poor, innocent child who had never wronged him by thought or deed.

How little Marston Ruce guessed the evil his note to Vera would work! What suffering would result to Adriel and himself because of it!

Lyon paced up and up and down the room, half mad with rage and pain; and then his eyes falling once more upon the note, he took it up and, tearing it into fragments, flung it from an open window.

"At least," he thought, "others shall not know how false she is," and then he sat down to write to her.

It was only a brief note, but though he did not guess it then it carried death with it. Then, this being finished, he scribbled a line to Lady Sandilands, begging her to consider Castellain House as her very own during his brief and compulsory absence, and promising to return as soon as business would allow.

Then he went to bed, though not to sleep, bidding his valet to call him at an abnormally early hour; so that before the ladies rose he was once more in town, which at this season was empty and dreary enough.

Lady Sandilands was first to enter the breakfast-room, and finding Lyon's note read it, wondering somewhat that he should have gone off so suddenly, but suspecting no evil.

"Adriel," she said, as the girl entered, "there is a note from Lyon beside your plate. He has been compelled to leave home for a short while, but will return as quickly as possible."

Adriel had no suspicion of the truth as she thrust the cruel missive into her pocket, thinking, with a sudden gladness, that, despite their strained relations, Lyon could not leave her without some fond farewell, and longing for the meal to end that she might escape to her own room, there to read her precious note alone.

And Vera in a state of anxiety, bordering on desperation, helped her in this.

"Grandmamma," she said, "naturally Adriel is dying to read her love-letter. Don't you think we ought to excuse her now. See,

she is eating nothing. May she not leave us?"

"She may if she wishes," said her ladyship, coldly, and, waiting for no further speech, Adriel hurried away.

Up in her own room she tore open the envelope, her eyes so bright with love, her face so flushed and expectant that could Lyon have seen her then he must have read the truth!

But, alas! alas! this was not to be; and as the girl mastered the substance of his note, her face changed and whitened. All the red died from her lips, and she stood like one turned to stone, scarcely breathing, scarcely conscious of what had befallen her. And it was thus Vera found her.

The arch-traitress put an arm about her, and kissed the pale, cold cheek gently. Adriel never heeded her; and before she spoke she read over her shoulder the few brief, cruel lines Lyon had written.

"I no longer ask or wish for an explanation of your conduct. It is less than nothing now to me why you have acted as you have done. Pray consider our engagement cancelled. From the first it was a mistake, and I do not hold you bound to me, neither do I consider myself dishonourable in breaking the frail tie which held me to you. You are utterly and absolutely at liberty to please yourself; and under no circumstance, believe me, can I resume the old relationship between us. You and I have nothing in common, and are best apart!"

"Adriel! what has happened?" questioned Vera, seeing in a lightning flash that the game was now in her hands. "Why are you standing here like a ghost? Why do you tremble thus?"

"What does it mean?" the poor child asked, hoarsely. "I cannot understand. Last night he was kind to me, and but two days ago he vowed he loved me more than all the world beside. This is some cruel mistake. Oh, Vera! say you believe that it is!"

"My poor child! my poor child!" murmured the other. "I can offer you no consolation. Men are so fickle, and Lyon is not the hero you made him. His wavering fancy has rested upon some other woman. He does not love you any longer."

"I won't believe it." Adriel cried hotly. "He could never be so base, and it is such a little time since he and I were engaged."

"Long enough for a man to weary of his love. Adriel! Adriel! I hate to say it, but there is another woman. For the time you are not first. Don't faint! Be brave!"

And as the girl reeled she caught her in her arms, almost afraid of the effect wrought by her own words. But Adriel twisted herself free.

"Who is she?" she asked in a hoarse, strained voice; and Vera, covering her face with her hands, cried—

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me! It is not my fault that he is false; and, in time, he will return to his old allegiance."

"You mean," questioned the unhappy victim, "*he loves you!*"

"He says so. It was last night. I was left alone with him, and I thought it an excellent chance to tell him all the truth, and all your goodness to me. But he would not hear me out. He vowed I should never marry Marston; and that he loved me more than life. That—oh! how can I hurt you so badly—but you ought to know the truth that you may learn to despise him—he said he never meant to propose to you; but that you had taken advantage of his liking for you, and led him up to it!"

The girl turned gaspingly upon her.

"Did he say those shameful words? Answer me; do not spare me—you cannot hurt me further. Are you telling me all the truth and nothing but truth?"

"Did I ever lie to you?" proudly. "Adriel, it is hard to be suspected wrongfully, and from the first I have loved you dearly."

"Yes, yes!" drearily, "and I am sorry to wound you; but I am not quite myself—not yet—not yet! I shall be braver and juster soon. Vera, what did you say when he confessed he loved you?"

"I told him some bitter truths; and because of them he has gone away. Adriel," feverishly, "what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. You must leave me to myself a little while. I must think! Go—go now! I only want to be alone!"

And all the while she shed no tear, and made no moan. But she thought in a vague way what she must do, and determined that she could never—never meet Lyon again.

To Vera she would not go for help; it was Vera he loved. She could not go to Lady Sandilands because she was under the ban of her displeasure.

Then all at once she thought of home—that dear old-fashioned home, where she had been happy through eighteen years—the kindly old-world sisters who had loved her so dearly; and then she rose up.

"I will go home! I will go home!" she said, under her breath, and "there I shall be at rest."

She dressed hastily, and counting out her little store of money, went downstairs and away from Castellain House for ever.

No one saw her go—no one missed her until luncheon, and then Vera said she supposed she had fallen asleep in her own room, as she had seemed very weary, and it would be a shame to disturb her, so that Adriel's flight remained undiscovered until evening.

It was quite dark when she reached Stanbury; but she was too wretched to feel any fear of the lonely, gloomy streets, and soon she came to her own home.

The maids had gone to bed—they kept early hours—and Miss Aurora herself opened the door to her young sister.

She gave one swift glance at the shrinking figure, the white, woe-begone face; then shrieked—

"Adriel! child Adriel!"

"Yes, it is I. Let me in, Aurora; I have come home to die!"

And then the spell of grief and stupor broke, the pale lips quivered, and the heavy sobs came, accompanied by a shower of bitter tears; and yet, through all her anguish it was good to feel herself safe in Aurora's loving arms, with Biddy kissing and fondling her slender hands.

The next day Lady Sandilands received a telegram from Aurora.

"The child is with us; a letter will follow." She replied by forwarding Adriel's belongings, and wiring, "Further communications not desired," and so that chapter in the child's life was ended.

CHAPTER VII.

In the days that followed, Lyon Castellain was not a happy man. He could not blot out the memory of those few bright weeks—the brightest he had ever known, or was to know again.

It was easy enough to vow with all a man's pride that he would forget one sweet, small face, and one low voice, both of which had seemed instinct with love for him.

Vera was sympathetic in an unobtrusive way; but Vera was not Adriel, and he was glad when she and Lady Sandilands removed to Scarborough.

The girl was growing desperate. True, she had separated Lyon from her cousin, but she knew that he loved her, and that if by chance they met explanations might possibly ensue, and she herself be exposed to the contempt of the only creature she cared for on earth.

Marston Ruce, too, was growing troublesome, and threatening all sorts of unpleasant things. She had hard work to keep him at bay, and began to realize how foolish she had been to compromise herself so far with him, how all in vain it is to attempt to stay the torrent of an injured man's anger.

At Scarborough Lady Sandilands found her a very distract companion. She herself was not well, suffering from a long-standing complaint of the heart, and she missed Adriel's gentle ministrations; but believing her guilty of a clandestine love affair, and angry with her for spoiling her own future she neither wrote nor permitted Vera to do so, although, indeed, that young lady had no wish to correspond with the girl she had so bitterly wronged.

And one night, Lady Sandilands, complaining of extreme fatigue, went early to bed saying she should be her usual self in the morning. But when the landlady carried up her usual cup of coffee she found her dead in her bed.

So Vera was alone in the world, and in her desolation she dared to do what otherwise had been impossible. She telegraphed to Lyon, begging his assistance, and he joined her at once, taking up residence close by her.

No inquest was necessary. Lady Sandilands' medical man certifying the cause of death; and in his pity for the lonely heiress Lyon took all the responsibility of the funeral arrangements upon himself. And when the sad ceremony was ended, and he and Vera were alone, he said,—

"And now, my poor girl, what do you propose doing?"

"I am utterly alone, quite friendless," she answered, sadly. "There is nothing I can do save hire a chaperone—and I hate hirings about me. I daresay there are many who envy me my wealth, but the poorest drudge on earth, who has a home and friends, is happier than I," and then she lifted her eyes to him, and in them he read her love for him—as she intended he should.

He was shocked and sorry for a moment; then swiftly came the thought, "We are both alone. She loves me, and if I like and esteem her—why should we not marry?"

So he took her willing hands in his, and said—

"Vera, you know my past, and that the one love of my life was given to one who did not value it. If you will be content with a second place in my heart I will do my best to make you a happy wife."

"Lyon," she answered, "I love you, I love you! I will be satisfied with the lowest place in your affection!"

And so they were betrothed; and as Vera had no friends to receive her, it was settled they should be married as quickly as possible, and at once return to Lyon's place.

So one morning Vera, laying aside her black robes for a pretty lavender gown, walked quietly to church with Lyon, and became his wife.

Society was electrified at this *dénouement*. It had not yet quite forgotten Adriel, and it was shrewdly suspected that somewhere there had been false play.

Adriel first learned of this ill-starred marriage through the medium of a fashion-able paper.

She was lying upon a couch, looking very frail and feeble, she had never been anything but ailing since her return home; and turning the leaves in a languid way, when her startled eyes fell upon the announcement.

If possible, her white face grew whiter, and a moment her lips quivered ominously. Then she said, with a little pathetic smile—

"She said he loved her, and sometimes I have doubted her, but I know now that she told the truth," and after that day the sisters did not hear her speak of him. They saw, with breaking hearts, that slowly but surely she was fading away from them, that soon her couch would be unoccupied. That "in the ways she used to walk she would not walk again," and that soon her place would know her no more. She never complained; no frown clouded the sweetness of her small, sweet face; no angry note jarred the music of her low and languid voice.

"She is too good for earth," Biddy said, sobbing, and Miss Aurora answered—

"Yes. And yet, but for Lyon Castellain, she would have stayed with us."

The Castellains went abroad, and did not return until the next season was in full swing.

Lyon interested himself in politics, and made much of the wife he did not love. Most folks called him a lucky fellow, but so he did not esteem himself.

One day, as he was leaving St. Stephen's, he heard himself accosted in a most uncomonious fashion.

"Hi! you there! Castellain, I want a word with you!"

And, turning, he saw a fair-faced, haggard man beside him. It was Marston Ruce; but Lyon had only seen him once, and then at a distance, so that he did not recognise him.

He glanced coldly at him, asking, in his iciest manner—

"Who are you, and what do you want of me?"

"I am Marston Ruce," answered the other, and paused, as though he thought his few words sufficient explanation.

"The man who was going to make a great name in the art world," said Lyon, quietly. "I have heard of you, your wonderful success, and subsequent failure. But I am at a loss to conceive what it is you want with me!"

"Liar!" cried Marston, beside himself. "For treachery less than yours men have killed each other! You have stolen away my promised wife—ruined my life!"

The other interrupted him, swiftly.

"You are all at sea! Let me explain! I did not even guess she had any lover but myself. I neither knew your name, nor the tie which bound her to you. But I did not marry her. I learned her deceit soon enough to save such a catastrophe. My wife was Miss Vera Garland."

Marston stared at him in bewilderment.

"Why, I am speaking of her! It was she to whom I was bound!"

"Are you lying to me?" Lyon asked, in a dreadful hoarse voice. "Who has sent you on this errand? If you were ever my wife's affianced lover why did you meet Miss Vinter and correspond with her?"

"I never wrote her a line in my life! But she was my ally and Vera's—at least I believed so. But I suppose she was as false as her cousin; she herself assured me I had nothing to fear from you—that she was soon to be your wife."

"There is something in this I do not understand! Come with me to my club! This mystery must be cleared up!"

They walked side by side in utter silence, but once in a private apartment Marston Ruce spoke freely of the wrongs he had endured of Vera's utter falsehood; and then all was clear to Lyon.

Oh! what a blind fool he had been so to doubt his darling! What a brutal part he had played towards Adriel!

He saw in one dreadful moment the wreck he had made of her life and his—all the sweet possibilities of joy he had hastily thrown aside, all the misery of the blank and hopeless future. He lifted his ashen face to Marston's.

"We have both suffered, but mine is the heaviest burden to bear, for I have sinned too. I have wronged the truest, gentlest heart that beats beneath the sun!"

Then a fierce desire came upon him to see Adriel once more. He must vindicate himself to her so far as was possible. So dismissing Marston he wrote a line to his wife—his wife! the woman he loathed so heartily now—saying he should not return that night; and then he went down to Stanbury.

A maid opened the door to him, and Miss Aurora, hearing and recognising his voice, came out into the hall.

"What do you want here?" she asked, grimly. "Have you come to work us further

harm?" and she barred the passage in an aggressive fashion.

"I want to see Adriel," he answered, humbly. "I have an explanation to make, I am not so bad as you think me. Will not you let me see her?"

"It remains for her to decide whether she will admit you or not. But I will allow no exciting speech. I will not have her life shortened by agitation. Of course, you have heard she is dying, and your conscience would not let you rest?"

"Dying!" Ah, the anguish in that one word! Strong man as he was he reeled and fell against the wall. "For the love of Heaven, assure me this is not so!"

"Are you sorry now? You who had no pity upon her youth and innocence! You, who drove her homewards with her broken heart and outraged faith! There has never been a day since she returned when I have not prayed Heaven to visit your sin upon you heavily! There has never been a day when I have not thought of some way in which to avenge her bitter wrongs. Oh, man! man! could you not spare her? The poor child, the helpless, loving, trusting child?" and then her voice broke into sobs, and all her figure was slakened with her long-suppressed anguish.

"As heaven is my witness," he said, earnestly, "I am innocent of the charge you bring against me. I can explain all—we have both been sinned against! I pray you let me see her."

"Ah, yes, Aurora," said Biddy's tearful voice, "do not deny him this one thing. Let her know the truth before the end. It may comfort her, and make her glad again."

Was this Adriel—this frail, white atom of humanity? Where had her youth and piety flown? Where was the smile he knew of old? The sweet eyes were sunken, and there were heavy circles about them. The pallid lips had a mournful curve; and as he looked on for a moment, himself being unperceived, all his manhood forsook him, and he cried with an exceeding bitter cry—

"Adriel! oh, Adriel!" She turned quickly, saw him standing there, and forgot everything save that she loved him and he had come again to her.

"I felt that you would come," she said, stretching out her hands to him. "Heaven is too good to let me die without seeing you." And then he was on his knees beside her, sobbing the hoarse and terrible sobs of a desperate man, and, woman-like, she controlled herself that she might console him.

And when he was calmer he told her all the gruesome story of Vera's treachery, and his own mad folly and harshness. His face was not good to look upon as he spoke of his wife, and vowed he would neither forgive nor live with her again. And then the loveliness of his poor little sweetheart's nature shone out like a bright star in a cloudy sky.

"If I forgive her, and indeed I do, you must forgive her also. It has been very hard to bear this heartache; but the worst is over now, and I shall soon be at peace. But she, poor Vera! may have long years before her. Do not make them all so unhappy as these months have been to me. She sinned through love. Ah! then for love's sake forgive!" and much she urged in the same strain, fighting against his obstinacy, his anger, his just scorn and loathing of his wife; and in the end she conquered so far that he promised not to put Vera to open shame, but beyond that he would not go.

All too soon came the hour of parting. He took her in his arms, well knowing he should look on her living face no more; and surely it was no wrong to Vera that he kissed the pale lips again and again in a very anguish of pain.

Then of her own free will the child put her arms about his neck, and gave him her last kiss, "sacred unto death," and saying—

"Good-bye, my dear one, good-bye! May Heaven go with you in all your ways, and bless you in all your doings." She loosed him, and let him go, then turned her face to the wall with a little sigh, and slept, or seemed to sleep.

Early in the morning Lyon returned, a desperate man, to his home. Vera was already up, and waiting his coming anxiously. As he entered the room, the sight of his wild face and burning eyes caused her to recoil.

"Husband! what has happened?" she gasped.

"I have learned all," he answered heavily, "and have seen her. She is dying! and you are her murderer!"

She shrieked out then, and tried to touch him, but he thrust her back almost with an oath, and what followed between them then none knew or ever would know. But although they would spend all the weary years of their lives together, Vera would never be his wife save in name, and because she loved him wildly her punishment must suffice to be great. Surely both Adriel's and Marston's wrongs could not be more bitterly revenged.

Beauty, rank, and riches she had, but never would she and happiness clasp hands again, and therein lay her punishment.

Aurora and Biddy sat watching by their darling, for the end was very near now. It was a lovely night in May, and through the open window came the scent of countless honeysuckles, the last faint song of the sleepy birds.

"It is a lovely world!" whispered the dying girl. "But for this great grief I would wish to stay a little longer with you. Oh, my dears! my dears! You must not fret overmuch. It is better I should go far, farther! and—oh, I am very tired. You will write to him when I am gone; say I thought of him to the last, and pray him to be kind to her. If it will comfort her, tell her I freely forgave her!"

Only their sobs answered her, and for awhile she lay silent; then she said, very faintly,

"Kiss me now—whilst I know you—and can reply to you." So they kissed her with fast falling tears, and tried for her sake to be calm.

All night she lay scarcely breathing, hardly conscious of anything around; but with the first grey streak of light in the sky she opened her dark eyes, smiling ever so faintly, and sighing, "Lyon! Lyon!" she fell asleep.

Aurora rose and reverently closed the white lids.

"She is gone!" she said, and with a bitter cry the remaining sisters clung to each other in wordless agony.

Aurora was the first to recover something like composure.

"Come," she said in a strangled voice, "there is much to do."

"Must we leave her? Oh! Aurora, must we leave her?"

"Now we must. Oh! Biddy, that we should be living and she gone! It is too cruel! too cruel!"

Then hand in hand, with tears raining down their withered cheeks, broken and old before their time, these two poor souls went out, leaving child Adriel to her last long sleep.

[THE END.]

JUDGE (to prisoner): "You have been here before, I think?" Prisoner: "Yes, sah." "What was the charge?" "Same as dis one—stealing chickens." "And you were convicted, too. I remember now." "Yea, judge. I was found guilty; but it wasn't my fault. I was convicted on circumstantial evidence." "How so?" "A man saw me takin' de chickens... he swore to de circumstance."

Gleanings

KISSING is generally the result of a heart affection.

TEN children, over 100 grandchildren, and fifty great-grandchildren constitute the family of Mrs. Mary Taylor, who died recently at Lancaster. More than a hundred of her descendants were present at the old lady's funeral.

A MAN who had been an inmate of the Limerick Workhouse for twenty years has just died, and £3,910 has been found in his possession. The master, in reporting the matter, said the man was "a miserly fellow who would never see either a priest, parson, or doctor."

X-RAYS AND DEATH.—Professor Ottolenghi, of the University of Siena, has discovered that while it is easy to apply the X-Rays to the lungs of a person who is alive or in a trance, it is practically impossible to apply them to those of a person actually dead. He suggests their use whenever there is any doubt of death.

THE FRENCH PRESIDENT'S REMUNERATION.—It is often said that the French President receives no more than £24,000 a year for his services. That is, as a matter of fact, the actual salary of the head of the Republic, but it is not generally known that M. Loubet is supplied gratuitously with a number of household necessities which represent in value at least a couple of thousand pounds a year. For fruit, vegetables, game, oil, logs for his fires, gas, and electricity he pays nothing, while in addition his household linen is washed free of charge.

CAT LEGATEES.—The old Parisian lady who has left £12 a year for the maintenance of her cat is not the only old maid in recent years who has made testamentary provision for her feline pets. Much more elaborate provisions were contained in the will of an old English lady, Miss Charlotte Rose Raine, who died some eight years ago. She gave her "dear old white puss Titions" and three other cats to a lady friend, and directed her executors to pay this lady £12 a year for the maintenance of each cat so long as it should live. Having given several other cats to other persons on similar terms, she entrusted the remainder of her pusses to the lady to whom "dear old Titions" had been given, and directed her executors to pay this guardian of her pets £150 a year for their maintenance so long as any of them should live; "but this," added the careful testatrix, "is not to extend to kittens afterwards born."

FARM PUPILS IN CANADA.—In consequence of the progress of settlement and of the great agricultural prosperity obtaining in Canada during the last few years, a number of agencies have sprung into existence in the United Kingdom, which offer to secure situations on Canadian farms for young intending settlers desiring to obtain agricultural experience, in return for which a premium is demanded. The High Commissioner is anxious to have the fact made public that the labour conditions in Canada, particularly in the western prairie regions, are such that any young man who is physically strong and possesses a sound constitution, and who is prepared to accept the conditions of farm life, can secure the opening he desires on a farm by simply giving his services in return for his board and lodgings as one of the farmer's family, together with a nominal wage for the first year. Lord Strathcona adds that the circumstances are not such as to necessitate any money payment as a premium or fee. We are asked further by his lordship to say that if any young men are looking for the opportunities referred to, and will communicate with the Emigration Department of the High Commissioner's Office, 17, Victoria Street, London, S.W., every assistance possible will be given them free of charge.

A CHICAGO millionaire has presented his little boy with a gold and ebony Noah's Ark. The figures are made of solid gold, and the eyes are all gems of great value.

TAXING A PLAGUE.—In Spandau, near Berlin, a great military centre, a tax has been put on automatic orchestrions, which are becoming an intolerable nuisance, as nearly every restaurant has one. It is hoped that the tax will reduce the plague.

BLACKPOOL is taking the servant question seriously in hand. A committee has been formed to organise a central registry office. If a domestic leaves a place in future under discreditable conditions she will be placed on a "black" list and boycotted. It is thought that this will benefit employers and servants alike.

AT the next sitting of the Manx Legislature a Bill will be introduced providing that tobacconists selling tobacco to minors under eighteen shall be liable to a fine not exceeding £10, or to imprisonment not exceeding one month, or to fine and imprisonment; while minors under eighteen found smoking or otherwise using tobacco are subject to a fine not exceeding £2, or to imprisonment not exceeding seven days, or to be whipped.

AN OLD NURSERY RHYME RENOVATED.—We wonder if our readers have met with the following delicious rendering of an old nursery rhyme:

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
For something to quench her thirst;
When she got there
The cupboard was bare—

Her husband had been there first!
The obvious moral of which is—Always get there first.

A FLAMISH artist has produced what is said to be the smallest painting in the world. It is a picture of a miller mounting the stairs of his mill, and carrying a sack of grain on his back. The mill is depicted as standing near a terrace. Close at hand are a horse and cart, with a few groups of peasants idling in the road near by. All this is painted on the smooth side of a grain of ordinary white corn. It is necessary to examine it under a microscope, and it is drawn with perfect accuracy.

THE FUTURE OF COAL.—What is to be the future coal consumption throughout the world? If we are to judge by the development of the immediate past, it must in this century assume such colossal proportions as very few now dream of. The total output of coal in the world in 1883 was only about 385 million tons, but in 1900 it had increased to about 700 million tons, so that there was an increase in this interval of 315 million tons, or about 82 per cent. If in the next forty years this rate of increase is maintained, the world's coal consumption in 1940 should be something like 1,400 million tons, or almost double the present colossal figures. Should this result actually come about, whence are the new coal supplies to be obtained?

TO STOP FLIRTING.—A Bill is said to have been introduced into the State Legislature of Albany, U.S.A., to stop flirting, and as few men plead guilty to indulging in this form of amusement, the Act must necessarily be aimed at women. Nor is this a single instance of man in America sheltering himself by Acts of Parliament from the wiles of the fair ones. There is an old colonial statute, still unrepaled, in New Jersey, which provides "that all women, of whatever age, profession, or rank, whether maids or widows, who shall, after this Act, impose upon, seduce, or betray into matrimony any of his His Majesty's subjects by virtue of scents, cosmetics, washes, paints, artificial teeth, false hair, or high-heeled shoes, shall incur the penalty now in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours."

A TEETOTAL "WINE LIST."—There is a teetotal Mayor at Eastbourne this year. This is the "wine list" at a recent mayoral banquet:—Orange champagne, ginger champagne, kola champagne, dry ginger ale, home-brewed ginger beer, natural lemonade, Kop's ale, soda water, seltzer water, Rosbach water, Apollinaris water.

TRADE UNION.—The estimate is that there are about 5,546,477 members of trade-unions in the ten principal countries. Great Britain, 1,905,116; the United States and Canada, 1,600,000; in Germany, 995,435; in France, 538,832; in Austria, 96,439; in Denmark, 64,000; in Sweden, 58,340; in Switzerland, 49,034; in Spain, 31,558.

INSECTS WHO STEAL INDIA-RUBBER.—When Para rubber trees are tapped, after the gum has run into receptacles and stiffened, a species of large black ant is accustomed to cut out pieces of the rubber and carry them away. Bees also find use for india-rubber, and some species in South America actually cut the bark of trees that produce resinous substances in order to cause a flow of the sap. The gum is employed by the bees as a ready-made wax for their nests.

BEES AS POSTAL MESSENGERS.—It is said that a great English apiarist has succeeded in turning to account the homing instincts of bees for the conveyance of messages. He took some bees a long way from their hive, gummed to their wings a tiny micro-photographed letter and set them loose. They all found their way safely home. In time of war these postal bees would have this advantage over carrier pigeons—it would be impossible to shoot them!

A QUAINTE MARRIAGE DOWRY.—A German paper reports a singular freak of paternal liberality in the matter of a wedding dowry. On the betrothal of his daughter, Herr Duchatschek had announced that he would give her, as a marriage portion, her weight in silver currency. Accordingly on the wedding day, the bride was formally weighed in the drawing-room, in the presence of the assembled guests before proceeding to church. The lady turning the scale at sixty-two kilograms (a little less than ten stone), a sack was at once filled with silver crowns to the same weight. The exact number of crowns was 13,500, about £560.

THE WORLD'S COAL PRODUCTION.—As far as can be ascertained, the output of coal throughout the world in the year 1900 was about 175 million tons. Of this quantity, the three principal producing countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany—produced 616 million tons; the next four most important countries—Austria-Hungary, France, Belgium, and Russia—produced 111 millions of tons; the next five principal countries—Canada, Japan, India, New South Wales, and Spain—produced 223 million tons—and the balance was made up out of a variety of minor countries, none of which, with the exception of South Africa, produces more than a million tons a year.

NEW COINS.—The distinguishing feature of the special set of coins—known among collectors as proofs, and very highly valued—are the unfiled edges and sharpness of outline, only a limited number being struck from special dies. King Edward's "Coronation set" will more nearly equal in value and number the special specimens of "Jubilee money," struck with plain edges, than those issued in 1838. For instance, Queen Victoria's set does not include the florin, that coin not being issued until 1849, when it appeared without the F.D., hence known as the godless florin, and recalled in the same year. The crown, too, though generally found with the Queen's set, was not minted until 1844; this is the "Gothic" crown of Wyon, one of the most beautiful English coins, but found to be of too fine workmanship to wear well.

LORD OF HER LOVE

BY EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Author of "Unseen Fires," "Woman Against Woman," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Sadie Lancaster is day-dreaming in one of the class-rooms of Park House Academy, when news is brought that Miss Lotway wishes to speak to her. Sir Reginald Darwent desires Sadie to travel to London at once and there join him. Sir Reginald is an invalid, and her heart goes out to him at once in womanly sympathy in his affliction, and she readily acquiesces in his wish to renounce all youthful pleasures for his sake. The need for Sadie's care and attention is, however, destined to be very short-lived. Ere many days are gone by Sir Reginald has another seizure, which proves fatal. With his dying breath he declares himself the father of Sadie, and, at the same moment, exacts a promise from Niel Gwynne that he will guard his only child, whose parentage for so long has been shrouded in mystery.

A day or two previous to leaving Park House Academy Sadie had clandestinely married handsome Jack Bonaldi. He is profuse in his avowal of his love for her, but will not agree to their marriage being made public. It is soon evident that his profession of love is the mask of villainy, but the man against whom his revenge is directed has passed beyond his reach.

CHAPTER X.

JACK takes one long puff at his cigar, then speaks abruptly.

"Now to business, Sadie. I want your help."

"Yes," she says, not moving from the tree against which she has crouched.

He laughs shortly.

"I may as well make a clean breast of it. I am in a devil of a mess, and that's the truth, and you must help me to get out of it."

"What do you want me to do?"

Her voice is quiet and cold, but the coldness is born of the constraint she has put on her feeling. Anyone who had the last atom of sympathy would notice that the tension on her nerves is terrible.

Not so Jack Ronalds; he is too deeply wrapped up in his own feelings; his tone and manner are strangely reckless.

"You must give me all the ready money you have. I leave England to-night, if possible, to-morrow without fail, if no cursed ill-chance comes to prevent me!"

"Leave England?" repeats the poor girl. "For—for—long?"

"How can I say?" he answers, impatiently. "For Heaven's sake don't cross question a fellow so, Sadie. Don't you see I am bothered out of my life?"

An icy hand seems to have closed over her heart, yet her throat is parched, her tongue difficult to move.

Jack peers at her angrily in the gloom.

"Come, come; don't stand there like a dummy. Don't you understand? I must have this money—I must leave England as soon as possible!"

"And—and our marriage?" she falters, feebly.

"Oh, d——n our marriage—no, I don't mean that!" he corrects himself hurriedly, as he realises his pressing needs, and that here alone he can get the aid he wants.

A shiver has passed over her frame at the indifferent curse; in that moment her great love has struck upon a cruel rock, and it trembles like a vessel that is stranded and threatens to go to pieces.

She stands so still that the man feels, with some alarm, he has let his selfish indifference go too far; he must first secure his end, and then he can laugh at his marriage tie as he will.

"Don't be angry with me, darling," he begins, trying to school his voice to the old seductive tones that had worked so fatally to

Sadie's undoing: "I have been worried, bothered to death, as I said just now, or I should never have spoken like that; you know that, don't you, Sadie, and you will forgive me. Kiss me, dear, to show."

But she shrinks from him. Somehow the romance, the chivalry, the veil of delicacy and refinement has gone. She sees him as he really is—coarse—cruel—selfish.

"I will do as you ask," she says, hurriedly. "Tell me what money you want, and I will go indoors and write a cheque."

"No; no cheque this time," he answers, roughly, for he is not best pleased at her manner and evident fear of him; he is so vain. It is not hurtful to his affections, but to his vanity. "Notes or gold, the latter for choice, and you had better get it for me as quickly as possible. I should be off now."

She moves away at once, then looks back.

"Jack," she whispers, and she clasps her cold hands tight together, "will you tell me this: Why are you going—what—what is sending you from England?"

He hesitates an instant, then says, grimly—"Debts."

She knows he is lying, and a shiver passes over her. She no longer wishes him to stay; she is suddenly possessed with a wild desire to send him from her. This is not Jack—her lover—her husband—the man whose image has been enshrined in her heart as something sacred and beautiful, whom she has blamed herself for even doubting—this is some stranger, whom she feels instinctively is false and cruel. He wants money, and then he will go. She turns back feverishly.

"Wait here. I will come to you immediately."

Jack does not quite like her tones.

What if she should go back and not return? or worse, what if she should tell others—that man her guardian—that he is outside?

He strides after and grips her arm.

"Swear!" he mutters, nervously and sharply, fear lending acidity to his voice; "swear you will return and that you will keep secret about—"

He gets no further. With scorn and contempt Sadie faces him.

"I have given you my word—that is enough," and drawing her arm away she moves into the darkness.

How she reaches the house she knows not; she is conscious of a cool breeze lifting the curls from her hot brow, of a flying moth or beetle buzzing close to her cheek as she walks through the darkness.

The grass is wet and chilly to her feet. Mechanically she lifts her gown and goes on to the path, but otherwise she is lost in some hideous nightmare, while a discordant voice rings in her ear, all the time repeating the curse he uttered on their marriage.

Up to this time she has not realized what hopes, what longings, she had put on the happy moment when before all the world she could claim Jack as her husband. Now those hopes and longings are suddenly dead. She is walking calmly over their grave. Her breast holds but one feverish desire to give him what he needs, and then send him from her.

He has scattered the dream, the idyll that has been her only solace during the miserable time just past. She sees and knows him as he is, and she shrinks from him with dread and a shiver of loathing which, all unmasked, has crept into her breast. She does not shed

a tear—her agony is too great for mere woman's weeping. She only feels that the veil of all that has beautified and aided her secret trouble is torn down for ever, and nothing remains behind.

Her quick intuition tells her that this man whom she must call her husband is in some danger, but of what kind or whether merited she does not hazard a thought. He claims her aid, and she will give him of her bounty, not to rescue him alone, but to rid herself of his presence.

The necessity for being fleet and attracting no notice comes to her. She steps on to the terrace, passes through the empty dining-room and on up to her own room.

Her maid is here arranging things for the night.

"Mrs. Dalrymple is asking for you, miss," she says.

Sadie flushes faintly.

"Go and tell her I will join her in two or three minutes in the orchard, Mary."

The orchard lies to the back of the Manor, and so Bee cannot by any chance meet or observe the man lurking in the grounds by the lake.

She speaks with difficulty—she seems chilled through, as if some penetrating spray of ice-water had drenched her, yet her head and throat are hot, and her lips burn.

As the girl goes she hastily unlocks her small treasure-box and takes out some money. An luck has it she is richer in ready coin to-night than at ordinary times, for the housekeeper came to her this morning and asked her for a large sum to pay the servants their quarter's wages, and settle other matters.

Sadie wrote a cheque, and this afternoon Bee and she had driven to the bank at the town near and cashed it.

She was going to give it all to the housekeeper in the morning, but now she has another use for it.

With cold fingers that tremble involuntarily she counts out the notes and gold, then locking the box, wraps the flimsy shawl tight round her and glides down the stairs.

She hears Bee's voice singing softly to herself as she obediently goes to the orchard, and Sadie, with qualms of self-disgust at the deceit she is compelled to practise, returns through the dining-room and on to the lawn, her black robed figure melting into the dark shadows of the night.

Jack has stood almost motionless during her absence, the cigar has died out between his lips—his bravado seems to have completely vanished.

Every now and then he glances round him with a quick, nervous shudder, as if he dreaded to see some enemy lurking behind him, and his hands thrust into the pockets of his dark coat are clenched each firmly, as if they held some weapon.

"How long she is!" he mutters, fretfully, after a time. "This hole is enough to suffocate a fellow. Once I have this money in my hand I shan't trouble my dear wife an instant longer! What's come to her—she's changed? I am not the lover I was, that's it, I suppose. Well, her eyes would have to be opened one day, so it's good now as later. Let me see; from here I must walk to Box-town; I shall get there about dawn, then make for the station, take train to Harwich and get out at some place on the way that will throw them off the scent, if they have any scent at all," he laughs, shortly, then grows garrulous again, "Will she never come? What if she means to play me false? Well, let her; I'm a desperate man, I don't stick at trifles. Money I shall and must have, even if I risk a chance in getting it!"

He peers again into the gloom, and moves fretfully and impatiently up and down.

The pale moon in the heavens sheds a faint light upon him and shows his face to be white and anxious, with beads of perspiration trickling from his brow.



THE VEIL OF DELICACY AND REFINEMENT IS GONE, AND SADIE SEES HER HUSBAND AS HE REALLY IS—COARSE—CRUEL—SELFISH.

Of a surety there is some great cause for this agitation or fear.

Jack Ronalds, who scoffs at everything and everybody, who rides roughshod over the delicate tendrils of a young girl's heart, who plots and plans, regardless of feeling or pity, is very far set from this hunted, dishevelled looking man with a grim purpose written in every line of his countenance.

The silence around is horrible to him ; he grasps a tree near, and then his limbs tremble beneath.

"Will she never come?" he mutters, and even as he does so the swish of a woman's skirts comes to his ear, and Sadie advances towards him.

"How long you have been!" he cries, harshly. "I have been in purgatory since you went. Have you been making the money? You have been long enough about it!"

"I have brought you all the ready money I have," Sadie answers, in the same quiet, constrained way.

"About five pounds, I suppose!" he says, hurriedly.

"You will find nearly two hundred here." She hands him the packet, which he snatches and slips into an inner pocket. "It was fortunate I had so much," she goes on ; "at other times I have very little out of the bank, but this was drawn for household purposes."

"It is well to be you ; two hundred pounds on only household purposes, while a poor beggar like me has to—"

She stops his sneer.

"How can you speak like this?" she asks, in a voice pregnant with bitterness ; "have I not prayed you, implored you to end this deceit, this horrible secrecy, and take your place as my husband?"

"Some day I may take you at your word," he replies, with significance ; "till then continue to pose as a martyr to your heart's content."

"You are cruel!" breaks from her lips ; but he is intent on his own plans.

"Now I must be off. That road," pointing to his left, beyond the grounds, "leads to a village, doesn't it?"

"Yes," she says, huskily.

He buttons his coat, and then lights another cigar.

"Good! I must push on at once. I will send you an address, Sadie ; but swear by all that is holy that you let no one know where I am. This money will last me some time, but I shall want more, and—"

"And I must send it," she finishes.

His face grows black at her contempt.

"You are changed, Sadie," he says, quickly, "and not for the better. Let me advise you to alter your manners again, or you and I may quarrel one of these days."

She is silent ! Changed!—ay! that she is indeed, but the change has come in the last half-hour, and he has himself to thank for it.

"Now good-bye!" he says, abruptly. "Remember all I have said, and also remember that much as you dislike it now, I am your husband, and so you will speedily find out if I discover you trying to play me false."

Without a word from her ashen lips she watches him stride away ; the cruel bitterness of his tongue eats into her heart. This is the meeting she has longed for, pictured so shyly, dwelt on so fondly. Instead of love and contrition she gets oaths, threats, and cruelty. All she has suffered, all the mental agony and shame she has endured, has been for nought. She glances wildly around her—of a truth she is punished well for her deceit. Her young heart is lacerated, her modesty trampled on, her pride and courage shaken at their roots.

She stands a figure of stone, and the night breeze moves the leaves above her head till they seem to whisper a murmur of pity for her desolation, sorrow for her wrecked life.

She recalls all the patience, the excuses she has invented for herself, when common-sense

sometimes would present Jack Ronalds in no flattering light ; and she shivers again as she remembers his ungenerous words, and the sneers with which he addressed her.

She passes one cold hand over her burning eyes. Is it a hideous dream or is she mad ? Try as she may—hope as she will—she can never be the simple-hearted, trusting, loving girl of an hour ago.

Doubts, fears, dread anticipations come crowding fast one on the other. She forgets everything ; she stands, her eyes strained on the distant spot from which her husband's form so quickly vanished, and her soul rises in a mute cry for help, for some healing salve to thrust on the wounds he has just inflicted.

She hears nothing—heeds nothing ; distant sounds of wheels that draw nearer and nearer do not awaken her—she stands motionless in the dark shadow till Bee's voice comes ringing out clear and sweet.

"Sadie! Sadie! where are you, dear? Niel has come—he is asking for you. Holroyd has come back with him, too."

She wakes with a shudder, and looks round.

"And what about the orchard, pray?" continues Bee, lightly. "Niel, what do you say to a young lady who—"

But Niel Gwynne pushes his sister unmercifully away.

A muffled sound has reached his ears, he sees two hands stretched feebly out, and then before he can reach her to clasp her in his arms, Sadie has slipped to the ground insensible at his feet.

CHAPTER XI.

"Breakfast in bed! Oh, you lazy little creature, what next, I wonder!"

So cries Bee gaily, as she carries up the tray with the dainty meal spread on it with her own hands.

Sadie smiles but faintly. She feels strongly weak this morning, for she has spent a

wretched night. When they carried her up to bed last night after her fainting fit Bee had sat with her for an hour, till she saw the lids fall over the lustrous eyes, then she had stolen away, little thinking that the sleep had been a ruse on Sadie's part to send her friend from her, and that no rest had come to the girl through the long weary hours.

She had fought a battle with herself as she lay awake and alone, and it is the struggle that makes her so weak this morning.

"How good of you, Bee!" she says, gently. "But you are not going to spoil me in this way. I shall get up directly."

"Oh! yes, certainly."

Bee swings herself on to the foot of the bed, having first deposited the breakfast beside Sadie. "But if you will be so fashionable as to faint, why, you must not be surprised at anything I do."

A little colour flushes the pale cheeks before her.

"It—it was so hot," Sadie murmurs, longing to open her heart to this sympathetic, loving woman; but, alas! she must not! she dare not! She will not breathe her secret now, for to speak of Jack must be to speak of his baseness—his cruelty to her, and that she has determined to look away even from her own sight.

"Indeed it was! Why, Niel arrived home prostrated, and as for poor old Holroyd—"

"Oh! I shall like to see Holroyd! He must not leave me again!"

"So Niel intended suggesting to you when he sees you. You know my beloved brother is one of those conscientious persons who never neglect a single duty they think they ought to perform, and Niel thinks his most important one as your guardian is to cross-examine you as to your wants whenever he sees you."

"He takes too much trouble over me and my affairs," Sadie replies to this, with a tiny sigh.

"He would gladly do twice as much unless I am mistaken," Bee thinks to herself; but she does not say this out loud—only busies herself with trying to persuade Sadie to eat some food.

"How would you like to go to the seaside, dear?" she asks, after a while.

Sadie's face lights up at the suggestion.

"I have only seen the sea once in my life. I think I should like it!"

Bee clasps her hands.

"Bravo! Bee Dalrymple, you are a splendid doctor! Now, why are you shaking your head pray, madam, may I ask?"

"Perhaps I ought not to neglect my duties. You see, I have been here so short a time, Bee."

"Ask Niel, and hear what he says. The heat has tried you terribly; sea breezes would blow away all your fatigue, refresh you in mind and body."

"Yes, yes!" Sadie rises on her pillow; eagerly she takes the bait; and, indeed, poor child, she longs to go from the Manor for awhile. It will be haunted for ever by the memory of what took place last night; but if she goes away for a time it may do her good, give her fresh hope and courage, though she can never be the same young, simple, trusting girl she was.

"Now I shall leave you for awhile, and if you insist on coming down you will find me in your den."

Sadie lies still as Bee flits away, and she sighs wearily. All the wretched heartache returns now, the bitter disappointment, as she realises her hero to be nothing but a brutal-tongued, selfish ne'er-do-well.

"My husband!" she thinks, miserably. Heaven help me. What a mistake! I am punished for my deceit and wickedness. How could I have been so blind? Why does love come and tempt us to ruin and unhappiness? Jack never loved me; he could not have spoken as he did if he had cared one straw about me. It is my money, yet I was poor when he

married me. Could he have ever known money was coming to me—could—"

And so on, over the wearisome road that, alas! so many a broken-hearted girl has trodden before. Sea breezes may freshen and brace up her health, but no breeze will brush away the cruel marks Jack Ronalds planted so ruthlessly in his young wife's heart.

Weary of thinking, of dwelling on the past night, Sadie rises and dresses herself slowly, and then leaves her room.

She hears Bee's voice singing in her boudoir, but her first visit is to the servants' quarter; she wants to see Holroyd.

As she passes through the hall someone strides in through the front entrance.

"Good morning!" says Niel, abruptly, taking in with a pang how fragile and white she looks. "Are you better this morning?"

Sadie gives him her hand and colours slightly.

"Quite better. I gave you a very poor welcome last night, Mr. Gwynne. I am sorry."

"You frightened me," is all he can say. She will never know the joy and pain it was to him to clasp her slender form in his arms and carry her to the house. He felt she belonged to him then, with her pale, beautiful face pressed to his heart, her pure white lips so near his own. Now she is separated from him again, and all the doubt, the hopeless feeling, returns.

"I think a fainting fit far worse to see than to bear," she says, trying to smile. "I am on my way to greet Holroyd. I must speak to him."

"I passed him in the grounds half-an-hour ago; the old fellow was wandering about with tears in his eyes, renewing friendship with well-remembered spots." Niel hesitates, then goes on, "I fancy, too, he has gone to the chuchyard."

Tears sprang to Sadie's eyes at this, but she turns away.

"I will see him when he comes back," she says. "Do you want me, Mr. Gwynne?"

"I do want to talk with you," he answers, pushing open the library door, looking wonderfully manly and handsome in his rough, country attire. Sadie likes this man very much; she has a strange sense of comfort in his presence that never comes with anyone else.

"Are you going to scold me?" she asks, with half a smile, then sighing gently.

"I am not equal to such a task," he answers, as she sits down by the window on the wide, old-fashioned seat that runs all round it, and plays idly with a newspaper he has thrown down, while he sits astride a corner of the table: "but I want to tell you that I do not like to see you looking so pale and thin, Miss Derwent."

Sadie's cheeks grow a shade rosier.

"I think the summer tries me," she says.

"So I think, and Bee agrees with me. She is quite distressed at your altered appearance, and fears you may be bored, too; but I knew this was not so," as Sadie utters an emphatic "No! no!" "You are not one of those people who are bored very easily. She suggests change of air—however, what do you say?"

"Yes—somewhere to the sea! I shall like it, Mr. Gwynne; but please don't think it is your duty to drag about with me everywhere I go. I am sure you must have other and more pleasant things to do!"

"I don't think I have," Niel answers, lightly; yet he speaks gravely, and his heart thrills. One moment more, and he must betray himself, but that moment does not come. Sadie, her womanly sensitiveness touched in some vague way by the tone of his voice, lifts the newspaper.

"What is the news?" she asks, hurriedly. He buries a sigh.

"Nothing wonderful. It is the dead season, you know, and the paper is full of letters on a variety of uninteresting subjects, and there is the account of a ginseng murder, which will do you no good to read."

Sadie shivers, and unconsciously her eyes

rest on the journal she holds. There in large print staring up at her are the words:—

"Horrible discovery in woods near Upper Wentworth! Suspected murderer escaped! Recognition of body by friends."

A cold shudder runs through her frame.

"Upper Wentworth," she murmurs, and he catches the word; his face frowned a little.

"Don't read it dear" he urges, using the word unconsciously; "the details are horrible."

Sadie starts at the paper, then suddenly flings it down and starts to her feet with one hand pressed tight to her heart, the other over her eyes.

"What is it, Sadie—what is it?" cries Niel harshly, as he comes up to her quickly, and sees the pallor of her face.

She remains silent for an instant, then her lips open and she whispers two words,—

"My heart!"

It is a false scents. Even in this moment of mad misery she retains her faculties sufficiently not to betray herself, and so she breathes a falsehood to this man whom all at once she knows regards her more than a friend.

"Your heart?" he murmurs, and his own face grows white with sudden dread and anguish.

"Oh, my poor child!"

She drops her hand from her eyes.

"Go, fetch me some brandy."

He gazes at her, then turns and strides away; in that instant she seizes the newspaper, and goes fleetly from the room up the stairs till she reaches her own apartment, and then, curtly dismissing her maid, locks the door.

"Tell Mr. Gwynne I have come here," she says to Mary, as she bids her go; and now she is alone with an awful knowledge—a secret so ghastly that as yet she does not grasp it. Alone, with no one to whom she can go for help, or ask to share this horrible trouble.

She sinks on to a couch, and in a strange, mechanical way takes up the paper and reads deliberately through the whole account.

She reads of a bruised and battered body being found in the woods, at first unrecognised, by afterwards claimed by friends. She reads that the suspected murderer, a Mr. Ronalds, tutor at Dr. Briny's college, has escaped, and there is no clue to his whereabouts; she reads of the horror, the consternation in the neighbourhood; and, last of all, she reads the name of the poor dead boy, and whispers it feebly with her lips.—

"Robert Cuthbert, and Jack has killed him!"

She drops the paper, bends forward with hands clasped and stares at the carpet in a desperate way, seeing each thread clearly, and even following the pattern in this supreme moment of mental agony. It is strange how such small things are imprinted on the mind! Sadie, as long as she may live, will never forget the pattern and colour of this carpet.

"Killed! Jack has killed him!" she repeats, as if she were learning a lesson; then, with a sudden cry of horror and anguish, "Oh, Heaven! it is awful! it is more than I can bear! The other day he was before me—speaking to me—clasping my hand, only a stranger, yet one that I felt I should never forget—forget! And to-day he was to have been my guest, and he lies dead—murdered by the man I call my husband!"

She throws up her arms, rises to her feet, and then falling on her knees crouches beside the sofa. No thought or hope of escape comes to her; she knows Jack has done this thing, his white haggard face rises in her memory to accuse him, while the very fact of his harsh manner, and his stealthy departure adds to the evidence she already holds against him.

Now all is explained—his haste and agitation, his desperate need of money; he came to her to fly from the result of his own murderous deed.

She rocks to and fro on her knees, and moans now and then, as if the pain at her heart is

indeed the spasm she has led Niel to believe exists. It is the most terrible moment of her young life, and she has not strength to stand before it.

A tap at the door rouses her.

She forces herself to her feet, and staggers to the window. The key is turned, so no one can come in.

"Who is there?" she asks, and her voice sounds hollow in her own ears.

"It is I—Bee. Niel said you were ill. Are you better dear? Can I do anything for you?"

"No—nothing. I—I am going to lie down for a time. Tell Mr. Gwynne I am better—and thank you."

She hears the footsteps die away, and she stands on, gazing at the summer-lit landscape, but seeing it distorted by the misery within her breast. She is going over and over the same thing until her brain reels, and her throat grows parched.

One resolve comes strong as iron. She will not willingly meet Jack Ronalds again, or even hold communication with him; henceforth he is nothing to her. As he treated her so she must treat him; only the loathing, the sudden terror, that comes at thought of him will add contempt and horror to her indifference.

So she reasons, little dreaming, poor child, that were Jack Ronalds three times a murderer he is still her husband; she knows nothing of the legal barrier that will stand between her horror of this man if he be brute enough to claim his dues.

"Murdered!" she repeats, again and again, "Oh! the poor boy! the poor boy! What had he done to Jack that he should be treated like this? Is there more sin, more treachery, to be learned? Is not the cup full yet?"

She turns from the window and kneels down beside her bed; her pale lips do not move, but she is praying—praying earnestly, fervently—for help in this the darkest hour of her life—for mercy to touch the blackened heart of the man who has wrecked her young happiness, so that she may repeat in due season, and save his soul.

She has no fear or dread that Jack will be caught. She knows that with her money he is already far beyond all reach; he is cunning and wary, as she fathoms now for the first time, and his life he will secure at all cost.

CHAPTER XII.

She remains in her room throughout the morning, and many a time she hears Bee's soft footsteps creep up to the door. Once she can trace a heavy sound, and in the silence a faint whisper.

"She must be asleep, poor child! We won't disturb her Niel, it is the best thing for her!"

And even in her misery Sadie sends up a sigh of gratitude that she has these two kind people to be with her, though they can never know the sorrow of her young heart.

By-and-by she forces herself to rise and walk to and fro. She has a difficult role to play in the future. Sooner or later she must begin it; there is no use in delay, so she determines to go down to luncheon, and so settle their alarm; besides, she is nervously agitated, she does not care to be too much alone.

Jack's white face, brutalized out of all beauty as she saw it last night, seems to gleam from every corner of the room. It is only her fancy, of course; but she is so ill, so weakened by the events of the past hours, that she almost believes he is near her. With cold, trembling fingers she unlocks her door and goes out on to the corridor, and as she does so Niel turns from a window, against which he has been leaning, and strides towards her.

"Dr. Reynolds is downstairs. He has come from the village, but I would not let him up. I thought it better not to disturb you."

"Thank you," she answers, faintly; "but I—I don't want a doctor. I shall be better tomorrow."

"I must insist on you seeing him," he says, gravely, firmly, but oh! so tenderly.

She half smiles, and her hands drop.

"Very well—as you insist."

She moves slowly along the corridor, and Niel takes one hand and draws it through his arm. As they stand at the head of the stairs he stops.

"Don't be frightened," he says, with a smile in his eyes and round his mouth. "I am only going to carry you down."

She makes a feeble resistance, but is too weak to resist, and so he picks her up as easily as he would a child, and goes carefully down. Sadie's eyes close as she leans her head against his rough coat.

There is an indescribable comfort, a sooth-ing influence in the touch of his arms and the near presence of something strong and reliable. She gives herself up to this vague sensation; and he, gazing down at her, longs with a passionate longing to keep her ever near his heart, free from all worldly care and suffering.

"I am sure I must tire you!" she says, in a whisper, as they are near the hall.

He looks down, and their eyes meet.

At the strange tenderness and passion in his eyes close again, and a new pang seizes her already lacerated heart.

"Bee is in here with Dr. Reynolds," Niel says, as he puts her down before the library door, "and so I will leave you."

"How good you are to me!" she murmurs and then turns away, and she enters the room.

The interview with the doctor is brief, but to the point, and Bee's heart jumps with delight as he peremptorily orders the young missess of Derwent Manor to be carried off to the sea.

As he leaves the two girls together and goes off to his carriage he meets Niel Gwynne.

"Well?" says the latter—he speaks quietly, but his breast is a writhing mass of agitation and dread mingling with his great love.

"She puzzles me, I confess," the doctor answers, as he draws on his driving-gloves. "There is nothing radically wrong with the heart—I mean there is not a sign of disease, but it beats feebly, and she has all the appearance of one who has gone through some great mental trouble and lately endured some shock. Do you know of any such thing?"

Niel shakes his head.

"No," he says gravely. "I have not the smallest clue to what you mean, except, of course, poor Sir Reginald's death. I think that did try her terribly."

"That is it, no doubt; of course, I forgot all about the loss of her father. I have told Mrs. Dalrymple I counsel most strongly an immediate migration to the sea; some small, bracing place, not too cold. I know the very spot! Tidemouth, in a sheltered part of Yorkshire. It is very quiet, but she doesn't want any excitement."

"I will make the necessary arrangements at once. My sister wrote me that Miss Derwent was far from well, and that is what brought me back. As her guardian I must take every care of her."

"Of course, of course." The doctor shakes hands and mounts his dog-cart. "And as a man over head and ears in love," he thinks to himself, "you would do it in any case."

Then he drives away, and Niel goes back to the library.

"May I come in?" he asks.

And Bee, following Sadie's gesture, answers yes.

Mrs. Dalrymple has drawn a long chair up to the windows, and has made the girl lie down on it, sitting bunched up herself on the step like a pretty little kitten.

"Niel, Sadie wants to see Holroyd."

"He shall bring in her lunch, and after that, ladies, I am going to discuss our journey. If you think you won't be fatigued I think we ought to travel to-night." Niel looks at Sadie as he speaks. "It will be cooler, and if the

trains are only amenable, better in every sense."

"We leave all in your hands," cries Bee.

Sadie does not answer; she is lying back worn out with the beating horror that throbs in her ears, and the knowledge of the terrible secret hidden in her heart; her face is very pale, and her eyes look supernaturally large.

Niel bends over her.

"If you do not think you are equal to it, dear," he says gently, "we will wait till tomorrow."

But Sadie is eager to be gone; she dreads another long sleepless night in the dainty bedroom that is haunted to her with spectres of her shame and misery.

"No, no," she murmurs back; "let us go to-night. I shall be better by the sea."

Niel goes to a shelf and takes down a Bradshaw.

"We can do it most comfortably," he says, after a careful search. A train leaves Fal-worth at six, reaching York at eight; there we shall just catch the last train to Tidemouth, and be safely housed by ten or half-past at the latest. Now you must send for your maid, and give them orders to pack at once. I know that there will be a momentous question about dress to settle."

Bee laughs, but Sadie does not even smile. What a mockery all this simple pleasure seems to her! Shall she ever feel young again, she wonders, and a sigh breaks from her lips.

Bee interprets it with a different meaning.

"I will look after Mary," she says, as she rises, "and superintend the packing altogether. I am first-rate at that sort of thing, and on my way I shall send Holroyd with some lunch, which, if you please Niel, you will see that Miss Dowent eats."

She bends to kiss the pale lips, and then flits away, leaving Niel sitting with the Bradshaw open before him.

Sadie shuts her eyes and forgets he is near her. Her brow contracts, and her mouth is almost disfigured, every now and then, as she goes over and over in her mind the horrible story.

Niel sits staring at her.

"Reynolds is right," he thinks to himself. "She has some secret trouble, and that is what is making her ill. What is it? Would she confide in me if I spoke?" He shakes his head. "No, not yet; I must keep silent a little longer. My poor darling! my poor, weak, fragile darling!"

He does not move, only sits gazing at her pale, lovely face, with the cruel marks round her eyes, the pathetic sweetness on her trembling mouth. Once he half rises, and she starts with a low cry.

"Who is there? It can't be! Don't—"

Then her eyes rest on his disturbed face, and she smiles feebly.

"I—I am so nervous," she explains; then, with a little catch in her voice, "don't—don't leave me, please, Niel!"

The blood rushes to his face at the sound of his name uttered so pleadingly, and seeming to him so heavenly.

He gets up from his chair, and moves towards her; but her eyes are closed again, so picking up a magazine from the table, he throws himself in a chair, and pretends to read.

There is silence between them till Holroyd comes in with the luncheon tray. The old servant meets the girl's sad gaze with tears in his eyes.

Sadie puts out her hand.

"I am glad to see you again, Holroyd," she says, and she tries to smile, but the effort is useless.

Holroyd puts down the tray, and goes rather hurriedly from the room.

"It is her mother's face, her distressful eyes!" he murmurs to himself, as he wipes away his tears. "What has happened to the poor child?"

Niel discards the magazine, and very gently but firmly insists on making Sadie eat some of the dainty meal set before her.

"You have a long day, and want all your strength, so I must be obeyed."

And when she has swallowed a few mouthfuls he pours out some wine, giving her, unknown to herself, a rather strong dose; then he makes her cushions comfortable, and almost before he has time to leave the room her eyes close, this time from exhaustion and slumber, and a more peaceful look creeps over her mouth.

"That is well," he murmurs to himself. "She will very likely sleep now on till five, and so will be better fit to stand the journey."

The summer moon shines over the rippling ocean, leaving a long, silvery trail that melts into the dimness of the horizon beyond the sea border.

"Isn't it lovely, Sadie?" Bee cries, as they stand at their bedroom window, and gaze out at the glorious night.

The lodgings are, to say the least, primitive. Niel had taken precaution to telegraph to what purported to be the hotel of the place, but which they find to be an old-fashioned inn—a mixture of a farm-house and a good-sized cottage.

The largest room is given up to Sadie, but as it has a smaller one opening out of it she beseeches Bee to share it with her, and make a dressing-room of the other part.

To this Mrs. Dalrymple agrees, and she little guesses the indescribable comfort that she gives the poor child by this arrangement.

"I should go mad if I stayed all alone to-night," Sadie thinks to herself, with a shiver.

She has gone through so much; it has been such a horrible day that she clings to Bee as to something that existed before the misery came to her.

The landlady has put them up two little white curtained beds, and Bee at once declares she feels at school again. She dismisses Mary and her own maid, and waits upon Sadie herself.

"Niel is somewhere in the attics," she laughs, as she kneels down, despite Sadie's weak protests, and unbuttons the small boots.

"I hope he is not uncomfortable," Sadie says, with a pang of self-reproach.

How good, how inexpressibly kind Niel has been to her this day. Ah! he is a man worthy to be loved and respected. No shame or terrible sin would come from his hand!

"Oh, no, he is all right. Don't trouble your little head about him, but just look at that sea. Isn't it grand? The sea always moves me strangely; sometimes it will almost make me cry."

Sadie bends her head and kisses the pretty face uplifted to her.

"I love you, Bee, dear!" she says, simply, but the other girl's heart thrills with pleasure.

"And so I do you darling!" she answers, "and for that reason, if for no other, I wish to see you get better; so please tumble into this pretty little bed, and go to sleep at once. The sea air is so refreshing and cool."

Sadie obeys her; she is worn out with fatigue and the mental strain she has been enduring; and though she does not sleep, she lies in a sort of stupor which comes as a blessed relief and rest.

The days pass very quietly after this.

If Niel and his sister had hoped to see any marked improvement in Sadie they are disappointed; she is still pale and strangely, at least to one of them, nervous and unstrung. She has little strength, and her one pleasure seems to crawl down to an old boat on the shore, and sit watching the waves dance in the sunshine.

Niel is more distressed than Mrs. Dalrymple, for he has come to the conclusion that the girl's ill-health and agitation comes from some trouble which she is hiding, and in this idea he is seconded by Holroyd, though neither man as yet has broached the subject to the other.

"If she does not get better soon I will have fresh advice. I may be wrong, and it may be

illness," Niel says to himself one morning, as he strides across to the slender form in its white dress with black ribbons. "Anyhow, this must end; it is getting more than I can bear."

"Bee has gone hunting for shells and other maritime curiosities with a regular Jack Tar," he exclaims, as he flings himself down on the sand beside Sadie's unopened book.

How he longs to speak to her of his love, to urge her to bring all her troubles to him! A hundred times a day it is on his lips to speak—for has he not her dead father's wish as a consent and a blessing?—but the words always die away—some indescribable feeling checks him; he guesses that her sorrow, whatever it is, will not be lifted by the knowledge of his love, and though he longs he keeps silent.

Sadie is gazing across at the small boats with white sails gleaming in the morning sun, and does not see the earnest, passionate look he bends upon her.

She says something about Bee's infatuation for exploring, with a tiny, fleeting smile, and as it fades from her face Niel rouses himself and lifts her book from under the pile of newspapers that have just arrived, forwarded, by his orders, each day from London.

And how does *Nancy* progress?" he asks. Sadie shakes her head.

"I have not got very far," she confesses, "but it opens very funny and so naturally."

"Newspapers are more in my line. Would you care to look at one?"

Sadie turns her eyes on the folded journals. Ever since that dreadful morning she can scarcely behold a harmless newspaper without a shudder. She sees those dreadful words running in letters of blood before her eyes.

"No," she says, faintly; "I don't care about them, thank you. But please don't mind me, Mr. Gwynne; I know you are longing to get to your leaders."

Niel takes up the *Daily Telegraph*, and his face falls; she has never called him Niel since that one time, and it seems like an omen of ill-fortune to him.

"Bah!" he says, with a shiver of repugnance, "the paper is full of that horrible murder down at Wentworth. Poor young chap! Lady Grafford wrote to Bee this morning; she is terribly cut up about it!"

"I cannot bear to hear it mentioned."

Niel looks over the paper, and is concerned at her increased pallor.

"Forgive me, dear! I have no right to talk to you of these things."

Sadie passes her hand over her brow. She feels she must give some explanation for the sentence she has just uttered.

"You know it shocks me so, because I lived in Wentworth all my life, and—and this Mr. Ronalds was one of the masters at Miss Lotway's school."

Niel utters an exclamation of surprise and pain.

"If I had only known," he reproaches himself. "Of course, you are naturally upset—to think that you were once near such a cowardly ruffian as this man Ronalds must be!"

His contempt does not wound her as it would have done, for her love is dead—killed first of all by his neglect and cruelty, and last by the horror of his sin.

Holroyd appears at this moment round the boat.

"If you please, sir, would you kindly come and settle with the carrier? He's brought a lot of hampers, and I don't rightly know what to do."

"Very well, Holroyd. I will come to your rescue."

Niel jumps to his feet at once.

"I will be back directly," he says, and goes away with his long strides.

Sadie watches him go.

"If I dare but tell him all, but it can never be now. How could I tell him my husband is a murderer?" She hides her face with a shudder; then as her hands drop she con-

tinues, "And although he is nothing to me now I must not betray him. He has put a seal on my lips—a seal that I may never break!"

She sits with sad, patient face, gazing across at the boats that have moved, and then she stoops to pick up her book with a sudden gesture.

"I must not think like this, or my mind will go," she says to herself.

The newspaper Niel has opened lies over her book, and she is just pushing it away when her eyes are riveted by a large heading to a paragraph:

"Suicide of John Ronalds, the Upper Wentworth murderer!"

Her breath stops, she cannot utter cry or sound; her heart stands still, and her brain reels. Then full consciousness returns; she grips the paper with hands that are hot and trembling, and reads on with her breath coming in short, thick gasps, almost like sobs.

The account is very brief, but tells of the discovery of a body, with pistol in hand, lying in a secluded spot near the River Seine. The face was horribly mutilated, but the remains were identified by means of papers discovered in the pockets, and letters addressed to J. Ronalds, Esq., at the College, Upper Wentworth.

As she finishes Sadie lets her hands drop, and the gesture tears the paper.

"Heaven help me and forgive me! My husband is dead, and—I do not grieve for him—he has gone with his crime full on his soul! I pray God will show him mercy, sinner as he was, as—as He has shown it to me!"

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2021. Back numbers can be obtained through any newsagent.)

HOME HAPPINESS.

Probably nineteen-twentieths of the happiness in this world you will get with the children at home. The independence that comes to a man when his work is over and he feels that he has run out of the storm into the quiet harbour of home, where he can rest in peace with his family, is something real. It does not make much difference whether you own your house or have one little room in that house—you can make that little room a home to you. You can people it with such fancies, that it will be fairly luminous with their presence, and will be to you the very perfection of a home. Against this home none of you should ever transgress. You should always treat each other with courtesy. It is often not so difficult to love a person as it is to be courteous to him. Courtesy is of greater value, and a more royal grace than some people seem to think. If you will but be courteous to each other, you will soon learn to love each other more wisely, profoundly, not to say lastingly, than you ever did before.

HAIL, FOLLY!

On a day I met with Folly,
Knowing not a flirt was she;
She was piquant, she was jolly,
And she thrust out melancholy
With a smile of witchery.
I, supine, could not disarm her,
Though I guessed in some degree
There was mischief in my charmer.
So it came about, you see,
Folly made a fool of me!

Folly tired of her adorer
When her slave I came to be.
Scoffing at the love I bore her,
Vexed because I boldly wore her
Too familiar livery.
Petulant, she scourged and left me
Shorn of all my panoply.
So it was when she bereft me
Of her smile, she set me free—
Folly made a man of me!

THE GOLDEN HOPE

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Lady Redwoode, the owner and undisputed proprietress of all the fair domain of Redwoode, has been left a widow a year or more previous to the opening of the story. Lord Redwoode left no heir, but expressed a wish that our dear deceased should bequeath his estate to their nephew, Andrew Forsythe, and never doubted Lady Redwoode's compliance with his wishes. Mr. Forsythe was musing over many things, and wondering what would happen to him should his aunt marry again. Judge then of his surprise when Lady Redwoode tells him the story of her early life. Secretly married when quite a girl, in order not to arouse the anger of her brother, with whom she was living in India, there came a day when it was necessary to tell all, and the scene that followed caused Lady Redwoode to fall into convulsions, and she lay ill for many weeks. On returning to life and consciousness, it was to find herself a widow and a mother.

Sir Richard Haughton, although but twenty-seven, has lost all joy in life through an unhappy marriage. News is brought to him that his divorced wife, Margaret Sorel, is dying, and the messenger eagerly begs an interview on the pretence that Margaret desires Sir Richard's forgiveness. Margaret fails to rekindle the old love, and swears that no other woman shall ever become his wife.

Now Lady Redwoode's brother is dead, and as an act of reparation has sent all the necessary proofs of her first marriage, but the secret of the identity of her own child dies with him. The two girls are coming to England, and it is for Lady Redwoode to discover which of the two is her daughter. After a little hesitation in coming to so momentous a decision, the choice falls on Cecile, who at once sets to work to ingratiate herself with Lady Redwoode at the expense of her foster-sister Hellice, and in this she is ably seconded by the Hindoo ayah.

Cecile's relationship is proclaimed to the assembled household; and to Hellice, who watched this rejoicing without one pang of envy, there suddenly comes a feeling of loneliness, and she turns unobserved into the garden to seek comfort among the shade of the trees. It is thus that she discovers Sir Richard Haughton, who for one moment gazing on the lovely vision ere it is lost to view. "I must see her again," he says, "Whoever and whatever she is I recognise her as my fate."

CHAPTER XIX.—(Continued.)

HE chamber Lady Redwoode and Hellice first entered was an octagonal-shaped parlour, the various sides decorated with exquisite paintings. Long and ample rose-coloured silk curtains shrouded the windows, and lights gleamed softly through the mellow shades of the hanging chandelier, whose lustres glittered and gleamed like imprisoned rainbows.

The furniture was covered with pink brocade and formed of glistening satinwood, which shone brightly, and was more than worthy its name. Huge antique vases of rare beauty and value thronged the mantel-piece and were niched in corners. Exquisite statuettes reposed on carved brackets, and books littered the elegant tables in profusion.

It was a cosy, homelike room, despite its luxuriance, and presented a strong contrast to the simplicity of the tower-chamber that had been assigned to Hellice.

"It is a charming room," said the young girl, without a thought of envy for these luxuries, which she would have so well appreciated.

"It is very pleasant," said the Baroness. "My dressing-room is next, and my bed-chamber is beyond that. The arrangement of my room is precisely similar to that of Cecile's."

She drew up towards the centre of the room a large easy-chair, stuffed with cushions, and bade Hellice be seated. Then she exhibited portfolios of engravings and pencil sketches, a host of interesting curiosities, and watched the girl as she looked them over in thoughtful silence.

Something there was in the dark, drooping head that touched her heart with an indefinable emotion, and she longed to embrace the maiden as she had done once before, and call her sweet names and admit her to the innermost recesses and the holiest love of her heart.

She became conscious that she had not bestowed her best and strongest love upon Cecile. She felt that Cecile had not the power to stir her soul to its depths as Hellice had. She felt a great wave of yearning tenderness

sweep over her heart; but, angry at what she deemed her weakness, she stifled the wild impulse to take Hellice in her arms, and her demeanour became constrained and troubled.

Hellice was quick to notice the difference, and arose at once to take her departure. Lady Redwoode was conscious of the cause of her abrupt leave-taking, but she dared not urge her to stay, lest the repressed tide of tender yearning should impel her to utter words which in a calmer moment she might regret. They separated, therefore, quietly and coldly, and when Hellice had left the room the Baroness paced her apartment in excitement and agitation, wringing her hands and weeping as only strong natures can weep.

Meanwhile, Hellice, to whom this coldness could scarcely give an added pang of grief, crossed the broad hall, and paused a moment in the deep oriel window to look down upon the lovely quiet lawn.

A dread of the morrow, when she must explain her troubles to Lady Redwoode, or meet Sir Richard again, came over her, and she longed to flee from Redwoode at once, and find rest somewhere where she might never dread the torture of beholding the lover who must henceforth be dead to her. This wild impulse grew into a determination while she stood there, and when she turned away it was with the resolve to quit her present home on the coming morning.

She had no intention of going clandestinely. It did not occur to her that Lady Redwoode would seek to prevent her departure, and she did not even think of returning to her ladyship to impart her resolve.

But she felt a desire to seek her foster-sister and Renee, and to tell them she was going away. She knew Cecile thoroughly—knew her to be false and hypocritical—but Cecile had been the playmate of her childhood, her nearest friend, her supposed twin-sister, and the old associations were still dear to Hellice.

And Renee, as her grandmother, had a right to know that the bond between them was to be severed for ever in a few hours. This the young girl, yearning for sympathy and kindness, told herself, and she turned her footsteps to Cecile's boudoir.

Renee was not there, but the curtains of silk and lace were drawn, the lights gleamed in the chandelier, and an easy chair was drawn up beside the little marble table in the centre of the room, upon which a basket of silver filigree filled with hot-house fruits reposed beside a Bohemian decanter of wine. It was Cecile's habit to partake of some slight refreshment before retiring, and it was Renee's province to prepare it for her.

Hellice noticed the affectionate attention of the ayah, and with a bitter smile she turned towards the window. The light of the chandelier was too strong for her weary eyes, and she liked to look out upon the pleasant night scene, the contemplation of which seemed to aid her efforts at self-control. She took her seat at the window, and the double curtains fell in front of her, completely shutting her out of the pretty, gaily-lighted chamber.

The minutes glided on, and still Hellice remained in her little nook, forgetful that she was waiting for her cousin, forgetful also of the scene on which she gazed, her mind occupied with efforts to map out her future. She strove to accustom herself to thoughts of loneliness, but she had a hard task before her.

Hers was one of those sweet and sunshiny natures that seemed formed to make a home happy. Her tastes were all calculated to brighten and beautify the fireside. With all her brilliant loveliness and genius her truest happiness could be found only in a domestic life, such as was the ideal of Sir Richard Haughton.

As all girls are apt to do, she had woven sweet dreams of a happy home, where love

should abide eternally, and it was hard to feel that she must henceforth be homeless and without sympathy—in brief, alone!

She was meeting these thoughts bravely, when her reverie was suddenly interrupted by the sound of voices, which she recognised as belonging to her cousin and the ayah. Thus recalled to herself, she became conscious that there were tears on her cheeks; she wiped them away, and strove to regain her usual bearing before she made her presence known.

The time thus occupied was less than a minute, but before it had elapsed, brief as it was, Hellice had heard words that made her resume her seat, pale and breathless, longing to escape unseen, and not daring to show herself to her relatives.

Cecile and Renee had come in together, the former from the hall, the latter from the adjoining dressing-room. The face of the former was pale, and her manner distracted, so that the Hindoo uttered a cry of alarm at beholding her.

"What is it, my sweet?" she ejaculated, going towards her. "Has anyone been cross to you? Has anyone looked darkly at you?"

"Everything seems to be going wrong, Renee!" cried Cecile, sinking into a chair, and refusing to permit the ayah to care for her. "I have not played my cards well at all. Hellice has been recognised as my adopted sister, and mamma has made a will, bequeathing her half her fortune. Just think of that, Renee—she is to have as much as I am! As innocent as Hellice seems, she is sly enough to look out for herself. I should not wonder if her illness had only been feigned to work upon Lady Redwoode's feelings. And they have been together continually this evening. Hellice has been in mamma's room——"

"How do you know that?" interrupted Renee.

"Mamma said so herself. I stepped into her room as I came upstairs. She was making a Niobe of herself," and Cecile's tone was petulant and heartless. "Of course she has against those doubts of hers, and she will have them, Renee, as long as she lives. I wish she was dead and the property safely disposed of. As it is, I never know when I wake in the morning but that some caprice of hers may cause Hellice and me to change places before night!"

These were the words that frightened Hellice back into her window nook in the involuntary position of eavesdropper.

"You are right, my bright-haired bird, my little one!" said the Asiatic, soothingly, approaching her young mistress, and suddenly dropping on her knees beside her. "But you have not told me half your trouble. This young man, Cecile—this Mr. Anchester, who has followed you from India, and who came to-night like a fond and adoring lover, and who parted from you as a tyrant parts from his victim—have you nothing to say about him? I saw my birdie flutter up to him, proud and happy, but when she came away her wings were broken and her spirit crushed."

Cecile hesitated, then a glance into the brown, loving face of her attendant decided her to be frank—as frank as she could be, for frankness was no part of her nature.

"I—I love him, Renee," she said, hesitatingly. "I mean that I did love him. I love him, however, no longer, and I shall never marry him. He is not the man he pretended to be and has no right to the name he bears. I am tired of him, and I suppose I shall marry Andrew Forsythe—unless, indeed, I get a titled husband. If Lady Redwoode's will were but destroyed, and it were out of her power to make another will, I should be perfectly happy."

"Can you not persuade her——"

"Impossible!" ejaculated the girl, impatiently. "Why, I should only ruin myself."

"True, Cecile," said the Hindoo, thoughtfully. "I know only one sure remedy. I do know a way to make you mistress of Redwoode immediately, and not only mistress of Redwoode, but of all Lady Redwoode's wealth.

Andrew Forsythe is a man to be bribed, and he could get that will from Mr. Kenneth if you would promise him your hand—”

“I would not hesitate to marry him,” declared Cecile, “if he could procure me that will and destroy it in my presence! But that would do no good—mamma would learn of its disappearance and make another.”

“But if she were dead?”

“She will not die,” said Cecile, impatiently. “Why do you thus tantalize me, Renee?”

“But she may die,” persisted the Hindoo, fixing her bead-like eyes upon her young mistress. “She may die, Cecile.”

And she touched her bosom significantly.

Cecile shuddered and grew pale. Bad at heart as she was, she could not think of the awful crime thus suggested without some remorseful pangs.

“No, no! Renee,” she whispered; “I could never consent to that!”

The Asiatic looked at her young mistress, as if pitying her cowardice, and then said:

“What is a single life, my sweet, when it stands between you and wealth, happiness and honour? You have not been educated to whine over a life lost, my pet. Think of it—if Lady Redwood were dead, you would be mistress here. You could make your own terms with Andrew Forsyth for the will in Mr. Kenneth’s possession. You could send Hellice away, and thus revenge yourself on her for what she has made you suffer since you came here. You can make an Eden of Redwood, fill the place with grand company, and be a queen over all. Think of the diamonds.”

“Hush!” said Cecile, hoarsely.

The Asiatic became silent, watching her mistress with a furtive smile.

The appeal had been made to one who could well appreciate it. Her knowledge of Cecile’s character had shown her what arguments to use. As she had said, Cecile had not been educated to respect the sacredness of human life. In that land where the Thug finds his home, where the burning sun, the deadly winds, and the malaria conspire against the traveller and sojourner, where deadly reptiles and beasts of prey sensibly diminish the rates of human life, where the passions are hot and strong, and the wrathful blow falls heavily, human lives are held cheaply.

Cecile, without the shadow of a religious principle, thought lightly of human existence. It was not at the thought of a sudden and terrible death she shuddered, but it seemed to her like profanation to destroy all that proud Saxon beauty, so like, yet so unlike, her own, and to lay low the peerless being who had received her and loved her as her daughter.

Renee left her arguments to work in the girl’s heart.

Cecile thought over them calmly, and added to them one of which the ayah did not dream. The remembrance of Darcy Anchester’s power over her stimulated her evil passions to supernatural activity. Her love for him had turned to bitter hatred, and she would have given much to dismiss and defy him. That could be done only when her position had become thoroughly secure—and it could never become secure while Lady Redwood lived.

It was a terrible picture, that of that fair young girl, with her blue eyes and gleaming hair, seemingly so pure and innocent, yet harbouring thoughts that might have affrighted the worst outcast in existence.

It seemed incredible that one so young and tenderly nurtured could be at heart so vile; but she had been all her life under Renee’s training, and no Asiatic could have excelled her in artfulness, dissimulation, and the capacity for extreme wickedness. It seemed indeed, as if her moral nature, having never had proper aliment, had died out entirely.

“Sometimes I am afraid Hellice will take your place,” said the woman, artfully. “If the least weight were added to Lady Redwood’s suspicion—if this Darcy Anchester were to scheme for himself, and say things—”

Cecile flushed and looked up, determined at last.

“Say no more, ‘Renee,’ she whispered; adding, “you have guessed something of the truth. Darcy Anchester heard papa’s dying communications to you, to Hellice, and to me.”

The ayah muttered an exclamation of incredulity, but she saw that Cecile spoke truthfully; her eyes glittered, and she said:

“It must be, then, this very night!”

Cecile bowed assent.

The woman drew hurriedly from her bosom the tiny golden casket, unlocked it, and selected from among its contents a tiny, gold-capped phial, which she handed to her young mistress.

“One breath of that brings death,” she said, restoring the casket to its hiding-place. “It must be held to Lady Redwood’s face that she may inhale it.”

“You must do it, Renee!” faltered Cecile.

“You forget that I do not have access to her rooms,” responded the Hindoo. “Where is all your courage, my sweet? You must go to Lady Redwood’s room now, immediately, and induce her to inhale this. It is like a perfume, and she will suspect nothing. One breath of it, and you are mistress of Redwood. Have you strength enough for the task?”

“Yes, yes,” said the girl, feverishly, all her hopes and fears crowding heavily upon her. “I will do it, Renee. I must do it, or all will be lost.”

She took the phial in her hand, listened absently to the ayah’s injunctions to avoid inhaling it herself, then pushed the woman from her, and crossed the floor once or twice with feeble and uncertain steps.

“She must be removed from my path,” she murmured, holding the opaque phial against the light, and her voice sounded hollow and strange in her ears. “She loved me—she claimed me—she showered blessings upon me! But she must die! It must be put beyond her power to rob me of my wealth and honours. I cannot be dependent on her changing caprices. She must die, and by my hands!”

She looked curiously at her small white hands, as if wondering whether they would be strong enough to grasp the proud position at which she aimed, and then she smiled strangely, gave a last look at her smiling tresses, and, strong in her guilty resolve, quitted her room, stealing stealthily to Lady Redwood’s apartments.

CHAPTER XX.

For a brief space Hellice remained in her concealment, paralysed with fear and horror. The wicked conference she had overheard seemed to her incredible. She fancied she must have been dreaming, but the light that stole in to her through the curtains of silk and lace, the sound of Renee’s footsteps and muttered soliloquy, all convinced her of the hideous reality of the scene of which she had just been an unseen witness.

A horrible spell seemed to weigh upon her, chaining her down to motionlessness, and all her efforts availed not to break it. Her breath came heavily through her parted lips; an iron hand seemed laid upon her wildly-throbbing heart, and her dark eyes shone with a wild light, as if already they were gazing upon the hideous form of Lady Redwood.

Suddenly the spell that bound her was broken. The ayah had retired into the adjoining room, and the sound of the door as it closed behind her was sufficient to arouse Hellice from this terrible paralysis. With one low cry that seemed to come from her very heart she sprang from the window seat, dashed aside the shrouding curtains, crossed the floor with a leopard-like leap, and gained the corridor.

Here she paused a moment to collect her thoughts, for even in her alarm Hellice could not bear to betray to the Baroness the horrible wickedness of the girl she had claimed as her own.

She felt that Cecile would not be precipitate in her movements, that her habitual caution would not forsake her, and a noble resolve thrilled her being to save both mother and child—the former from a speedy and sudden death, the latter from a life-long remorse, as well as from the discovery of her intended crime.

She moved forward quietly to Lady Redwood’s room—the same she had visited an hour earlier. The door was slightly ajar, and she passed into the room. The lights burned dimly now, but Hellice could plainly see at the first glance that the room was unoccupied.

Her heart thrilled with a sudden fear that Lady Redwood might have retired to bed, and that the deadly poison might have been already made to do its work.

With a quick, soft step she advanced into the dressing-room, but started as she beheld her form multiplied in the numerous mirrors lining the walls. She did not linger here, but advanced at once to the door opening into the bedroom. It was shut, but the latch yielded to Hellice’s gentle touch, and she pushed it open sufficiently to command a view of the interior of the chamber.

Her eyes grew wilder in their expression and her face became deathly pale at the scene she took in at one comprehensive glance.

There was a night-lamp in the bedroom, shedding a low-toned but clear and mellow light. The bed was clearly revealed, the light falling upon it and its occupant. It was a pretty, low, French bedstead, looking like a snow-drift half veiled in a rosy mist. The curtains were of pink silk and thin white lace, looped away in front with long, drooping sprays of roses, on which glittering drops of simulated dew rested lightly.

Lady Redwood was sleeping soundly. Her pale golden hair had been gathered under a pretty cap of lace and ribbons, and was drawn away from her pure, sweet face, every feature of which stood out with the distinctness of sculptured marble. There was a disturbed quiver about her mouth which testified that she had not retired to rest with happy thoughts, and her cheeks were as pale as if she knew the fate that threatened her.

But Hellice gave the sleeper only one brief glance, concentrating her attention upon the other occupant of the chamber. That other was Cecile. The acknowledged daughter of Lady Redwood was creeping stealthily towards the bed, guilt expressed in every line of her face, in her half-suppressed breathing, and shown plainly in her manner and bearing. She looked like a bird of prey about to pounce upon its victim. Her blue eyes glinted with deadly intent, gleaming like the blue steel of a Damascus sword; her slender fingers wound themselves with a grip of iron about the death-laden phial she carried in her hand, and her lips had wreathed themselves together into an expression of fearful subtlety and cunning.

There was little resemblance in her now to the pure and lovely Lady Redwood. Her murderous thoughts had brought into every feature a strange and subtle likeness to the Hindoo ayah; and, despite her golden hair and blue eyes, one would not have found it hard to believe Cecile to be an Asiatic, with the worst faults of the Oriental races.

Hellice watched her with a sort of fascination, and, unconscious of scrutiny, Cecile crept nearer and nearer to the bed, moving slowly and almost imperceptibly. Her fingers began to play nervously with the golden cap of the phial, as if she would have it ready for use.

It was time to do something, and Hellice strove to think rapidly and clearly.

She was anxious to awaken the sleeper to a consciousness of her danger. She also wished to spare Cecile the condemnation that would greet the discovery of her intended crime. To betray Cecile’s guilt would be, she believed, a death-blow to the proud and loving mother. To get Cecile away quietly, and then to communicate to her that she should leave Redwood for ever on the morrow, was the idea that sug-

gested itself to her. If Cecile were relieved of all apprehensions that her cousin would share in the Baroness's wealth she would, Hellice believed, relinquish her murderous designs, and become a true and affectionate daughter.

She moved the door slightly to attract Cecile's attention, but the effort was vain. She dared not call to her lest the sound of her voice would awaken the sleeper. Without deliberating longer in the emergency she glided through the aperture into the bed-chamber, and moved softly behind Cecile towards the bedside. The thick carpet muffled her footsteps, and she held her breath lest her breathing should startle Cecile into self-betrayal or precipitancy in her awful designs.

Slowly and softly she advanced, unseen and unheard. As no leopard in its native wild was more graceful than Hellice, so no leopard could have moved more stilly when planning an attack on an unsuspecting prey. But the comparison could go no farther, for Hellice was planning to save a life, a reputation, the life-long happiness of two women—one of whom was dearer to her than life itself, and the other she had regarded as a sister from their mutual infancy.

The two girls presented a remarkable contrasting picture.

One so wicked and deadly in her intentions, the other so brave, noble, and strong, with purity shining in her sweet face, an heroic resolve beaming in her troubled eyes, and a great and holy purpose manifest in her manner.

Cecile continued to creep towards the unconscious sleeper, and Hellice continued to glide behind her with imitative cautiousness of movement. Cecile gained the bedside, bent over its occupant, and then noiselessly removed the cap from the phial. The next moment she loosened the stopper.

A moment more and the deadly drug would have been placed to the nostrils of the sleeper, and no art could have availed to save Lady Redwood's life.

But at the instant when Cecile stopped to enact the fatal, final scene of the tragedy—at the instant when the stopper was about to be withdrawn—at the instant of the foul attempted consummation of the awful crime—a hand was laid upon Cecile's with the firmness of the strongest steel!

The hand held hers like a vice, and another hand—a firm, white hand, slender and delicate, yet nerved at that moment with the strength of a man—took from her the death-laden bottle.

Cecile looked up affrighted, and beheld her cousin, so pale and stern that she seemed to her like an avenging angel, in her deadly terror; she uttered a loud and piercing scream that rang startlingly through the rooms like a wail.

Hellice had not anticipated this result to her interposition, and she involuntarily retreated a step, the phial in her hand, making a gesture of silence.

But it was too late for silence. Lady Redwood had been awakened, and she sprang up in her bed, alarmed beyond measure, demanding what had happened.

It seemed as though some familiar demon inspired Cecile at that moment. Comprehending the exposure that awaited her, furious at Hellice for betraying her, seeing upon what a narrow isthmus between safety and ruin she stood, she sprang forward with one wild bound, caught her cousin in a frantic embrace, and shrieked:

"Help! Help! Murder! Save my mother!" Hellice strove to release herself, but in vain. Cecile clung to her, renewing her cries for help. Members of the household began to flock in, terrified at those fearful night-cries. The struggling cousins were seen by the whole family, and Cecile did not relinquish her hold until Mr. Kenneth, shocked and frightened, loosened her grasp on Hellice.

"What does this mean?" cried the Baroness, looking from one to the other of the

cousins, and then at the various members of the gathering group.

The question was echoed by Mr. Forsythe, Mr. Kenneth, the housekeeper, butler, and by the ayah, who stood in the doorway with starting eyes.

"Bear witness, all of you!" cried Cecile, in a ringing voice, exhibiting a pale and rigid countenance, "that Hellice was seeking my mother's life! I saw her creeping into these rooms and I followed her, thinking she came from some evil motive. I found her attempting to poison her as she slept, and I saved her life at the risk of my own."

Every eye was turned in horror upon Hellice.

For one brief second the blind instinct of self-preservation impelled Hellice to declare the truth and turn the accusation upon Cecile. She drew herself up, her eyes flashed, and the indignant words arose in her throat, but they never found utterance.

She could not blight Lady Redwood's life, she could not deprive her cousin of all hope for the future. She believed that if she were gone from Redwood Cecile thought she would relinquish her wicked designs and become a comfort to her mother. She believed that the cause of her cousin's conduct was jealousy at her recognition as co-heiress with her. That jealousy removed, Cecile would look upon her present conduct with horror, and compensate for it by a life of goodness and devotion. As she thus reasoned, a sublime spirit of self-sacrifice, like that which has moved many a gentle, lovingly nurtured woman to meet unmurmuringly the terror of the martyr's stake, arose within her breast. Instead of uttering the expected denial, she bowed her head without a word.

"See, she has the bottle still in her hand!" cried Cecile, triumphantly, delighted at the corroboration Hellice's conduct gave her false assertion, but yet cunning enough to conceal her joy.

Every eye was directed to the tiny phial, and it fell from Hellice's nerveless hand to the floor. The golden cap, which Cecile in her fright had dropped, lay at a little distance from it.

"Cecile is mistaken!" cried Lady Redwood. "Is it not so, Hellice? Deny her accusation! Tell me that you did not mean to kill me!" she pleaded, tenderness and anguish mingling in her tones. Hellice maintained silence, but her face grew whiter than the cap which crowned her ladyship's head.

"I know it is not so!" exclaimed the Baroness. "Hellice is incapable of such a crime. The phial contains some innocent perfume. Give it to me, Cecile, and let me see what it is!"

Cecile picked up the bottle and silently gave it into the hands of her mother.

Lady Redwood was about to remove the stopper, when Hellice cried out:

"Do not smell it! A breath from that phial gives death! It is an Indian poison—"

She stopped abruptly as Lady Redwood flung the phial from her and looked at her with an anguished gaze.

Hellice's heart arose in response to that look in wild and tender yearning, and again she dropped her gaze, that Lady Redwood might not read her innocence in her eyes.

Hellice's assertion of the deadly properties of the supposed perfume were to various members of the group sufficient evidence of her guilt. The servants moved away from her as if they feared she would kill them all by an exhibition of more poison; the housekeeper and the butler, with apprehensive glances at the ayah, whispered to each other that it was not safe to live under the same roof with one of the Hindoo race; and Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Kenneth watched the two girls, not knowing what to say.

At length the old lawyer ventured a remark.

"I do not see any motive for such a crime," he said, slowly.

"Motive!" repeated Cecile putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "Oh, Hellice, is it pos-

sible that you would have killed my mother because you feared that she would destroy the will she made in your favour? You could not have been so wicked! I did not dream tonight when you came to my room and told me of your fears that you would have recourse to violence. You know that you said that you could not bear to be dependent upon mamma's caprice, and that if you had your fortune in your own hands—"

"Cecile!" cried Hellice, involuntarily, turning an angry look upon her cousin, and regarding her with flashing eyes. "How dare you—"

"It's true!" interrupted one of the maids, a terror-stricken, opened mouthed country girl. "I saw you go into Miss Cecile's room before she came up, and you stayed there too, miss!"

Cecile could scarcely repress a shrik at this assertion, but she knew how much depended on her self-control. Renee was frightened too, and began to consider how she should give evidence against Hellice.

"It is painful for me to say anything against you, Hellice," said Cecile, with sobs, "but your Indian blood—"

"Indian blood is as good as any," interrupted the ayah, roughly. "Hellice brought that bottle with her from India, and if she were going to kill any lady with it you can lay the intention to her English blood!"

For Hellice to have contradicted the ayah, and declared the presence of the casket in Renee's bosom, would have required more self-control than she possessed. She believed that she would escape with a dismissal from Redwood, but her grandmother would be punished with imprisonment if her share in the attempted crime were known.

The evidence against the accused had become most formidable. Mr. Kenneth had been staggered by it, and his round face had become very grave in its expression. Not a doubt existed in anyone's mind except in Mr. Forsythe's, and his previous study of the cousins contributed greatly to his comprehension of the present affair.

Lady Redwood would have persisted in her belief of Hellice's innocence, but that the girl refused to deny the accusation, and preserved her mysterious and unsatisfactory silence.

The conviction of Hellice's unworthiness was a great shock to the Baroness. She had begun to take a greater hold on her heart than Cecile had, and she had yearned over her as if she had been nearer and dearer to her than Cecile. She lay back on her pillow, deprived of strength, and experiencing a strangely crushed feeling.

"Tell me there is some mistake, Hellice," she moaned, faintly.

A pained, agonised look convulsed Hellice's face. It was gone in a moment, however; yet with all her efforts she could not be as calm and unconcerned as her deceitful cousin.

"Do you deny the accusation, Miss Glintwick?" asked the old lawyer as a judge might have addressed a prisoner at the bar.

Still Hellice made no answer.

"Have you any statement to make, any explanation to give, Miss Hellice?" inquired Andrew Forsythe, anxiously.

The girl hesitated, and then replied—

"I have nothing to say. Cecile must speak for me!"

"So young, yet so hardened!" groaned good Mr. Kenneth, his last hope in the girl's innocence dashed to the ground. "How could you plot to destroy the life of your benefactress, the aunt whom your father so cruelly and terribly wronged? Was there no gratitude in your heart? Could a little miserable money outweigh in your mind the noble and generous life of Lady Redwood—that life which is one constant work of good to others?"

"Oh, don't!" cried Hellice, putting up her hands pleadingly.

There was a brief silence. The first consternation had been passed, and a feeling had sprung up of wonder as to what would be done with the supposed culprit. Lady Redwood

was appealed to by Mr. Kenneth, and she answered—

"I cannot discuss the subject farther to-night. I have not decided what to do with her. Let her go to her room. Cecile will stay with me!"

She turned her face to the wall, unable to say more. Cecile declared her readiness to remain during the night with her, and the group began to disperse to their rooms, the butler, Mr. Kenneth, and Mr. Forsythe alone remaining. Hellice, without a word, retired from the bed-chamber. In the little parlour Mr. Forsythe approached her, held out his hand, and whispered—

"I believe in your innocence, Miss Hellice. I know you are innocent. I understand and appreciate your motives for silence!"

Hellice gave him a grateful look, and permitted him to press her hand warmly. Any sign of friendship in her present extremity was eagerly welcomed, and she forgot her late displeasure towards him in her present gratitude. His words went with her like warmth and sunshine to her chamber, and she was almost unconscious that she was attended by Mr. Kenneth and the butler, who waited outside until she had locked the door within.

"She can't escape from her windows, I suppose?" inquired the old lawyer.

"No, sir, not easily," replied the butler. "I am going to sleep before her door all night, and I shall watch her closely. No fear, Mr. Kenneth, but I shall produce her safe enough in the morning!"

With these words, he stretched himself upon the carpet before the door in such a manner as to check all egress from the maiden's chamber, and prepared to keep a vigilant watch throughout the night.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2013. Back numbers can be obtained through any News-agent.)

MY SOLDIER'S GRAVE.

You decorate with sweetest flowers
The graves of all your dead;
You water with the tenderest tears
Each hero's lowly bed.

So I, too, search both far and near
For blossoms bright and fair,
With which to deck my soldier's grave,
The object of my care.

You strew your gifts on grassy mounds,
On green and sunny slopes;
I scatter balmy flowers above
The grave of all his hopes!

For though he breathed the breath of life,
With soul subdued and calm,
He bartered health and strength, and lost
In war his strong right arm.

When he returned, alas! he found
His friends (?) had passed away—
All but one true and faithful heart,
And that is his to-day.

Daily I strew the flowers of love,
And faith, and hope, and cheer,
About my soldier's living grave,
Bedewed by many a tear.

"CAN you send the mounted police up to 594?" inquired a voice through the police telephone the other day. "What's the matter?" "Someone tapped the till of my grocery of five shillings." "Are you holding him?" "No; he has been gone half an hour." "Then what good will the waggon do?" "Well, it will get out a crowd and look like business, won't it? I sell for cash, and my prices are lower than ever before."

VINDICTIVE PEOPLE

Among all social grades there is a generous sprinkling of people who studiously nurse vindictiveness. Byron was ungallant enough to write "Revenge is sweet — especially to women"; but it would be an injustice to the sex to attribute to them more than an even share of resentfulness. There are little-minded men who vindictively record in their minds, for due resentment and punishment, every action which in any way impinges on their dignity or militates against their interests, and who pride themselves on never forgetting, as if that were a virtue. "I'll be even with him, even if I have to wait until I write his obituary notice," was the form in which a popular journalist expressed his feelings towards an eminent legal luminary, and perhaps vindictiveness could not have had more complete expression.

Luckily for the credit of human nature, it frequently happens that these treasured dislikes wear out rapidly. Resentments that once seemed to promise a lasting bitterness sink into oblivion and are wholly forgotten. From fresh points of view old differences look trivial and mean. Notwithstanding all this wear and tear of vindictive feeling, there is quite sufficient malignant spitefulness in the world to warrant us in studying it somewhat closely.

Vindictiveness has its origin in a union of extreme sensitiveness, vanity, selfishness, and littleness of nature. The vindictive person is usually easily wounded. Vanity causes the wound, which may be self-inflicted by imagination, to rankle until it gives rise to vengeful thoughts. The generous, careless, big-hearted person throws off these poisonous germs of jealousy, but to some people they stick like burrs, and fester into hatred and plotting. The men and women who become susceptible to this plague of spite are no longer people of common sense and just feeling. Vindictiveness blinds the eyes to the true state of things. It is like a flush of gall juice in the system—poisonous. Let men or women be sufficiently narrow-minded and embittered by ill-will, and they do not need to suffer positive injury to have their vindictiveness aroused. They will fancy they are wronged even if they have no real grievance, and if no better source of ill-will is available, they will resent any good fortune or success that has befallen a neighbour because it is not theirs, and will minister to their own envy by harming those who have prospered.

Vindictiveness shows itself in several ways that are perhaps a little less reprehensible than positive injury, though not much. For example, there are people so mean and envious that they will rejoice in the misfortunes of others. If somebody who has been in comfortable circumstances loses money, and is obliged to map out life afresh on a less ambitious scale, the pity of the disappointment will not strike such as have a vein of spite in them, but they will rather feel that misfortune has served the victim right. They will say they expected what has happened, and really they will be glad of it.

One of the subtlest forms of vindictiveness is the spreading of disparaging opinions about those whose conduct is resented, or whose personality is regarded as an offence. There is very little difference between this practice and the actual attempt to work for someone else's injury and downfall, which is the open way of showing vindictiveness. The latter method is sometimes basely avowed by unscrupulous men. They will boast of having put "a thorn in the side" of anyone to whom they object. Indeed, there are people so peculiarly constituted that they cannot be opposed or thwarted in any way, however legitimate, without feeling at once the desire personally to injure their opponent. These are the people who are described, often without much implied rebuke, as "good haters." If we get at the bottom of the hate which such people feel, it will as a rule be found to be vulgar and selfish vindictiveness.

The Latchkey for Women

Who wants a latchkey? Are women in general suffering for latchkeys? Are the wives and mothers of the land pining for latchkeys? Are their slumbers disturbed, and their waking hours made sad and lonely, because they cannot enjoy the privileges of latchkeys equal with their fathers, husbands and brothers?

We are being repeatedly informed that woman is emancipated—that she is a free agent, that the tyranny of man, etc., can no longer grind her into the dust, and tread on her, and mash her into powder. We are told that now she has a right to speak when she pleases, and that she has an unquestioned right to rule in and out of the home as a man has. And, in our experience, she wasn't particularly backward about exercising those prerogatives even before she was emancipated.

Can it be possible that her thralldom is about to begin again? that she is to be deprived of the one thing that is needed to make her lot brighter, and happier, and her spheres broader, and longer, and bigger generally—the latchkey? May the saints forbid!

Now, we should inquire, what is the matter with a woman going boldly up to the front door of her house when she has been detained at her club, or office, until after dark, and ringing the bell? And, while she is waiting for her true and faithful husband to fumble round for the matches, and upset the lamp, and get into his pants, and such other dry goods as he may deem necessary, and come down and open the door, she can contemplate the heavenly bodies, and repeat poetry, instead of swearing, as he would do under like circumstances.

If he is a good, model husband, he will sit up for her, and keep something hot for her, as she has so often done for him, when he was attending to those perplexing books at the office, or going through with the soul-harrowing ordeal of "seeing a man" on important business. And he will tell her, as he tenderly assists her to mount the stairs—tell her with tears in his manly voice, if not in his eyes—how dreadfully anxious he has been, and how enraptured he was when he heard her well-known ring.

Later on he will probably strike in on a mild little curtain lecture; and then she will tell him to hold his tongue, and let a poor, tired, distracted woman get a little rest. And she would say, furthermore, that a man never seems to be satisfied unless he is nagging somebody.

A husband should make home pleasant for his wife, so that she will not be tempted to stray therefrom. He should smile on her continually. He shouldn't find fault with her housekeeping, lest he lead her to seek happiness elsewhere. And he must not forget to smile always.

A woman does not need any latchkey. If she had one, she would put it in her pocket, if she had any pocket, and she would have to rouse the whole neighbourhood before she could find it in that pocket. And in the absence of a pocket she would put it in her bag, and she would have to take out her purse, six or seven letters she had forgotten to post, a button-hook, a pair of gloves, a handkerchief, a note-book, a paper of pins, a comb, a box of chocolates, and other articles too numerous to mention before she could get at that key, which she had tucked into the bottom of her bag for fear she should lose it, and a dreadful burglar should find it, and get into the house, and murder her husband in cold blood, and steal her diamond ring, and her new sealskin jacket.

No, a woman doesn't need a latchkey; for all women who have good husbands will be at home at nights with them; and all women who have no husbands will be at home, waiting for their lovers.

Society

The King has, it is stated, already made arrangements to visit Balmoral shortly after the Coronation, in order that His Majesty and the Queen may be able to enjoy rest and quietude after the fatigue which they will inevitably undergo. The Royal gathering in the North will be a purely family one.

By far the greater number of the public functions, apart from those associated with the death of the late Queen and his own Accession, in which the King has taken part during the first year of his reign, which has just come to a close, have been connected with the war in South Africa. In May His Majesty presented colours to the 3rd Battalion Scots Guards, on the Horse Guards' Parade; in the following month he presented war medals on the same parade ground to about 3,000 officers and men, including Earl Roberts and Lord Milner; in June he also presented the Ashantee medals; in July he presented medals to soldiers and military nurses for services in South Africa and Ashantee; in October he presented medals to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; and last week he reviewed the Guards at Wellington Barracks. In addition to this His Majesty has twice opened Parliament in person, and paid visits to the Kaiser and the King of Sweden.

Good progress has been made at Kensington Palace with the preparation of the suite of rooms which is to become the "town house" of Princess Henry of Battenberg. Very quietly at her cottage in the Isle of Wight has the Princess passed most of the year since the death of Queen Victoria. That event brought great changes into her home life and habits—greater perhaps than it brought to any others, for her daily life had become one of constant devotion to her mother. Now, however, the Princess proposes to see more of her friends than she has hitherto done, and Kensington Palace will shortly know the difference when she comes into residence in her charming town quarters "in a palace in a garden."

Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, who is going to Cannes, will be the guest there, at Villa Monteray, of a remarkable man. Sir Sydney Hedley Waterlow, first baronet, was born eighty years ago. He began life, and very nearly ended it, as a printer's boy in some subterranean newspaper office. There, however, he gave earnest of his intention of getting on by getting over an attack of what would now, we suppose, be called plague. At fifty he was Lord Mayor, and it was the famous "Shah's year" that saw him in the Civic Chair. He left it a baronet. A very considerable portion of the business and social correspondence of the world has been conducted upon paper of his providing.

LADY LONDONDERRY, whose arrangement of diamonds and pearls has already attracted attention at two great functions this season, promises to maintain, at the Coronation, the reputation which, at Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the Lady Londonderry of that day won. "Lady Londonderry, as Cleopatra, was in a dress literally embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe," wrote a fashionable diarist about a fancy ball in 1835. And in 1858, at the Coronation, the record of an observant onlooker, and one who had the Hebrew eye for jewels—Disraeli it was—declared: "Lady Londonderry blazed amongst the peeresses." History repeats itself. Next June will see the same diamonds blazing on a different but an equal beauty.

SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE has been receiving many letters from people anxious to see the Coronation ceremony disguised as choristers. One young tenor has, indeed, offered the Westminster Abbey organist a bribe of "a couple of sovereigns" if he would allow him to attend! Among the letters lately received was one from a gentleman who sang at the coronations of William IV. and Queen Victoria. He was formerly in the choir at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and despite his eighty-eight years he is still singing in a cathedral choir.

Comfort for Rheumatism Sufferers.

IT SAVES YOU FROM OTHER AILMENTS!

A medical authority has recently advanced a very strange theory. It is that persons who suffer from rheumatism, neuralgia, and gout, are saved thereby from catching common illnesses. The acid in the blood which causes these ailments prevents the development of other diseases. However this may be, we imagine that sufferers from rheumatism would be glad to get rid of it and would take the risk of contracting other illnesses. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing cure for neuralgia and rheumatism and a proof of their efficacy against the latter ailment is proved by the case of Mr. John Griffiths, the Steward of the Oswestry Conservative Club. He says:—"Three years ago I contracted typhoid fever. For six long months I was as weak as a child. After that I gradually began to recover strength, but only very slowly, and I found that the disease had left me with rheumatism in its most acute form. My legs and feet became so stiff that it amounted to absolute torture to walk about. My back was weak also, and what with the weakness and rheumatism I began to think seriously that I should have to retire from active life altogether.

"All this time I was being regularly attended by my doctor, but he did not seem to be able to pull me together again. My brother, who lives in Middleton-in-Teesdale, sent me a box of Charles Forde's Bile Beans, and I tried them as I had done other medicines. But they proved widely different. By the time the first box was done I found to my great pleasure that they had given me considerable relief. The pains and the stiffness were not nearly so severe. I got a second box, and the good I had reaped was still further increased. I persevered with them, and, to cut a long story of gradual yet effective recovery short, after taking four boxes I was completely freed from rheumatism. What is better still, it has gone for good.

"I am now able to get about and do my work as if I had never had a day's illness in my life. From every chemist of repute Bile Beans may be had for one and three halfpence or two and nine per box, but they are never sold loose.

Gems

It is seldom that a man loses his temper, even under the greatest provocation, without having cause, sooner or later, to regret his want of self-command. There are few of our fellow creatures so unimportant that it is not worth while to conciliate them, none that may not some time have it in their power to inflict on us an injury.

The inward influences and illuminations which come to us through those who have loved us are deeper than any that we can realise; they penetrate all our life, and assure us that there must be a fountain of life and love from which they and we are continually receiving strength to bear and to hope.

WHEN I look like this into the blue sky, it seems so deep, so peaceful, so full of a mysterious tenderness, that I could lie for centuries and wait for the dawning of the face of God out of the awful loving-kindness.

FOR things never come quite right in this world. The threads seem to slip out of our hands as we are going to tie the knot.

INSTRUCTION is a teacher, but Example is an artist, and our emotions are the colours he mixes on the heart's palette.

DONE IN COLOURS.—Clara: "I was surprised to see so much paint on your face last night. I never saw anything like it in my life." Maud: "Well, if you can't afford to buy a mirror I'll lend you one."

Facetiae

"BRIDGET, did you get the flowers that I am to wear to-night in my hair?" "Yes, mum, but ——" "But what?" "I've mislaid the hair, mum."

EDITH: "Engaged? I wish you joy! How does he look?" Clara: "I cannot tell positively. He is indescribably fine-looking. How then can I describe him to you?"

JINKS: "Ha, ha, ha! That's a pretty good story, isn't it, Binks?" Binks: "Very good." Jinks: "I told it well, too, didn't I?" Binks: "Well, I think my nurse used to tell it better."

"How's business?" "Oh, it's picking up. How's yours?" "Well, mine's falling off." "So? What is your business?" "Going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. What's yours?" "I'm a rag-picker."

"So your husband was drowned in the late floods?" said a woman to another. "How sad! Did they recover the body?" "No," sobbed the widow. "John always had a habit of going to the bottom of everything."

"PHYSICIAN, heal thyself," jocularly said a rich man to the doctor as he came into his office. "Thanks! That is just what I propose to do," replied the doctor, presenting a bill for fifty pounds. He went out well healed.

YOUNG man (whispering to jeweller): "That engagement ring I bought of you yesterday." Jeweller: "What's the matter with it: didn't it fit?" Young Man (cautiously): "Sh! It didn't have a chance. Gimme collar-studs for it."

CHARLEY (to his pretty cousin, who is fishing): "Any bites yet, Maud?" Maud: "Only a nibble or two." Charley: "What would you do, Maud, if you should make a good a catch as I am said to be?" Maud: "Throw it back in, Charley."

CUSTOMER (to restaurant man): "Boy!" Restaurant man: "Don't call me boy, sir! I'm no boy, sir, and won't be called boy, sir, by nobody, sir!" Customer: "Then do as you'd be done by, and don't call this old mutt 'lamb' any more."

"WHAT is it, my friend," cried the temperance lecturer, gazing furiously around him. "What is it that causes men to desert their firesides, break up happy homes, and bring endless misery to all the human race?" "Cricket!" responded the small boy in the corner.

Mrs. FORTUNESEEKER had been hinting to Judge B., who is old and rich, that her daughter would make him a good and loving wife. "She is very much in love with you, judge," said the lady, suggestively. "I am sorry, but I cannot reciprocate the affection of a young lady who shows such bad taste," replied the old judge, reaching for his hat and cane.

YOUNG CLAMMY (with a tremendous idea of his conversational powers): "My mother will be down in a few minutes, Miss Keene. Cawn't I entertain you until she comes?" Miss Keene: "How good of you, Mr. Clammy! Will you be kind enough to watch my coachman out of the window, and see that he keeps his cape buttoned up tightly? The poor fellow is so delicate, you know."

PARSON SPINE: "I understand, deacon, that the church carpet is being ruined by the water from dripping umbrellas!" Deacon Goode: "It is so, parson, and something has got to be done." "Why not have a rack in the porch, and leave the umbrellas there instead of carrying them to the seats?" "I am afraid it would spoil the solemnity of the benediction." "You think so?" "Yes; everybody would want to be first out, so as to get the best one."

Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

N. W.—You perhaps imagine a good deal of your unattractiveness. Try in your behaviour to hit the Irishman's "middle extreme" between romping and prudery, and you will doubtless after awhile meet some good fellow of whom you can be both fond and proud.

D. M. C.—If your parents should think it advisable for you to do so, you might inform your lover that unless your engagement can be fulfilled you would prefer to have it abandoned. This would probably bring him to a positive decision, one way or the other. You should not allow him to trifle with you any longer.

FIREPROOF.—The first English patent for a fire-resisting safe was to Richard Scott in 1801. It consisted of an inner and an outer casing of metal, the space between being filled with charcoal or wood treated with an alkaline salt. The first American safes that attained any celebrity were those constructed under the patent of C. J. Gaynor, issued in 1853. They were double chests, with spaces between them for air, or other good non-conductors of heat.

GREGORIAN.—The golden number for any year is the number of that year in the Metonic Cycle, which embraces nineteen years, the golden numbers ranging from 1 to 19. This cycle came into general use soon after its discovery by Meton, about 432 B.C., and the number of each year in it was ordered to be engraved in letters of gold, from which the name originated. Since the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, the point from which the golden numbers are reckoned is 1 B.C.

JENNIE AND ROSE, girls of sixteen and seventeen, whose parents very properly forbid them lovers on the ground of youth, fancy themselves desperately in love with two comic opera singers, and ask my advice about sloping with them and appearing on the stage. I answer that they could not choose a surer and a speedier road to ruin than such a course. I fear there must be something radically wrong in the natures that can thus lightly forego the tried home-love of years for the enticing tongues of comparative strangers. The very fact that the fascinating singers entice you to clandestine meetings proves them to be no gentlemen, and the further fact that they wish you to appear on the stage proves that they are not disinterested. Let them alone, and five years from now you will rejoice over your escape.

INGENIOUS.—When it is said that some person terribly afflicted has been smitten to the heart, the meaning is plain; but to say that he had been smitten to his forcepump would, of course, be rather dubious as well as absurd. When the lover, in the old song, says, "I give my heart, I can no more," his sweetheart has no difficulty in understanding him. But if he should resort to your "scientific" physiologist and say, "I give my force-pump," etc., the lady would doubtless be non-plussed. Many a lady, in the olden time, embalmed the heart of her dead lover or husband, and sighed and wept away her life over it. Had she been suddenly made to understand that the thing she so earnestly regarded had had no more concern in the affection which the deceased bore for her than his heel or his elbow, but was to all intents and purposes only a force-pump, what a revulsion must her feelings have undergone! You will have to pursue science on another tack. Mankind will not give up all the grand, beautiful and sacred associations with which the heart has become connected as the organ of the affections.

B.A.D.—The girl is evidently not worth any further trouble on your part. She is only torturing you to laugh at you. Seek a more congenial spirit to pass through life with you. With such a person you never would be happy. She would "nag" you into a fit of the horrors before the honeymoon is over.

LEICESTER.—The line you ask about is from Shakespeare's play, "As You Like It." It is an utterance of the exiled Duke in the Forest of Arden, and the entire quotation runs thus: "And this one life, exempt from public haunt, Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks; Sermons in stones and good in everything."

Rosa.—It does seem that the young man might have made up his mind in the two years he has been visiting you, but may be he has such a great mind it takes a long time "making up," or perhaps he may take it for granted that you consider yourself engaged to him. At any rate I cannot advise you either to ask his intentions or let your mother do it, for it is always an undignified and unladylike proceeding.

MIND HEALING.—You should try to make your peace with the girl's aunt. It is unnecessary for you to contradict her notions about the mind cure. By looking into the matter a little you will find some points about it on which you agree with her, such as that the mind exercises great influence on the body; that if the mind is led to believe that a course of treatment is beneficial, such a belief helps to make the treatment curative; that a great deal of the sickness with which large classes of people are afflicted is more or less imaginary, and that if the imagination be turned in the right direction the supposed ailments will disappear, and so on, almost without end. In this way you can be a comfort instead of an annoyance to the old lady, and your course of true love may be made to run smooth again.

LILLY.—Your drawing does not indicate that you possess any decided talent for the art. It might be, however, that if you could have the advantage of good instruction, you would develop such talent as would make it worth your while to cultivate it.

TRROUBLED.—According to your statement, the wife has not done anything that would give her husband any legal ground for a divorce. He should be very cautious about taking any step that would cast a stain upon his family, and be a source of sorrow to his children as long as they live.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND indeed.—Your friend is certainly not an old maid. The writing is good enough for a girl of eighteen, and I should advise you to inquire at one of the large establishments you name during your leisure hours, when you will doubtless obtain all the particulars you require. I feel highly flattered that so evidently experienced a young lady should deem my replies occasionally interesting.

HARRY B.—Meerschaum (German for sea foam, so called from its lightness and whitish appearance) is a hydrous silicate of magnesia. It is of a soft earthy texture, somewhat resembling chalk, and is found in various parts of Southern Europe in veins of serpentine and in tertiary deposits. It is easily cut, and when first removed from the bed is of a cheese-like consistency. It is also found in Asia Minor, in alluvium, apparently the result of the decomposition of carbonate of magnesia belonging to neighbouring serpentine rocks. For exportation it is roughly shaped into blocks or in rude forms of pipes. The artificial meerschaum, of which the cheaper pipes are manufactured, is made of the chips or parings of the natural mineral, which are reduced to fine powder, boiled in water, moulded and dried, sometimes pieday being added to the mixture.

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95, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.**

LAWYER.—The Scriptures say, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife," so I would advise you not to be in haste to apologise to the old folks. Let them come round of themselves, and in future they will not be so apt to make mischief.

SIR RICHARD.—Gold was, in all probability, one of the earliest discovered of the metals, as unmistakable proofs have been found showing it was used by the Hebrews, the Egyptians, and other ancient nations for much the same purpose as it is at the present day. The name of its original discoverer has not been handed down to posterity.

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